

GAME BAG



"I'll hear your hail and look back to catch your smile."

GAME BAG

Tales of Shooting and Fishing

BY
NASH BUCKINGHAM

ILLUSTRATED BY

H. P. A. M. HOECKER



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS • NEW YORK

TO
MY NEPHEW

PFC.—JAMES ARTHUR VALENTINE WARE—ASN. 34720019

Who, like countless thousands of other intrepid G.I. Purple Hearts, taught since boyhood to handle firearms and shoot straight—gave it, got it, and took it for God, Country, and Freedom's Cause—but will carry on again to gun marsh and field with a grateful old "Nunky"—for whom and other loved ones he laid his life on the line.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The courtesy of *Field & Stream*, *Sports Afield*, *Outdoors*, *American Field* in permitting reproduction of some of these stories is gratefully acknowledged. In the article "Wild Or Tame Game Birds For Future Gunning," full collaborative credit to Mr. Werner O. Nagel, of Columbia, Missouri. We also acknowledge the co-operation of Mr. Charles Gillham, Chief, Sportsmen's Service Division, Olin Industries, East Alton, Illinois; and express deep appreciation to Robert S. Anderson, of Memphis, Tennessee, sportsman-photographer, for his fine co-operation.

CONTENTS

Fo'word	xiii
Given Only to the Honored	3
The Gallows-Bear	16
Ghost Trout	32
Bird Dog "Blinkers"!	47
Like Old Times	54
Wild or Tame Game Birds?	67
The Great Reprisal	101
A Certain Rich Man	116
What Really Happens Out Quail Shooting?	132
Januaries Afield	145
Jail Break	156
A Pretty Place for Pheasants	170
Backward—Turn Backward	176
We Give You Back	186

ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
"I'll hear your hail and look back to catch your smile." <i>Frontispiece</i>	
"Pat has challenged and battled every hazard and fury of the most powerful river on Earth."	10
"Tom's famed double-nose got an outstanding workout that sunny afternoon."	20
"A scene, I told myself, as ageless as God's wrath."	21
"May young eyes see again cool dawn mists."	26
"And long skeins of wood ducks woven against sunsets."	27
Field trial Champion Eugene's Ghost winner-in-action at U. S. Open, 1922. One of setterdom's all-time greats.	48
"What canine neuroses, inhibitions, complexes, and allergies lurk in bird dog make-ups?"	134
"With a touch of sadness I see this old life afield slipping away."	135
"Hal has crossed over the river—so let my 'Ahai Ahatou-Hai' ring on him."	178
"God bless a day and dog like this. . . ."	186

FO'WORD

FOR a period so protracted as to visibly shrink one's life-expectancy, Nash Buckingham has been promising to take me hunting and/or fishing to some of those fabulous old gunning and angling paradises about which he writes. Nash made the initial proposal soon after I had first read *De Shootimest Gent'man*. For the benefit of those coming in late, this establishes the period as approximately the Glacial Age.

During intervening eons, Nash has reaffirmed that solemn pledge. While partaking of Mingo's hot-cat-an'-taters at Doug Stamper's Mermaid Tavern, for instance, he has lured on my panting novice's hopes with oral paintings of waterfowling as practiced of yore at Beaver Dam, or, in more modern vein, at "Section 16" along Bayou Lagrue's pin oaks and ricelands. He has led me up into the high hills and shown me the Seven Temptations of quailing at the Ames plantation, Hugh Buckingham's farm, or in Bob Carrier's plush coverts. Listening raptly, I've found myself actually changing into shooting togs at table, while Mingo's shrimp gumbo, meandering its spoon's rim, registered chameleon-like deposits along my necktie or in the upper-tier creases of my waistcoat.

Many's the day, a much younger Paul basking in the sunshine of a benign and understanding Gamaliel's smile, I have in mind's eye centered a high-flying brace of greenheads, scored repeated rights and lefts on bobwhites zooming beyond Ethel and Edgar

Queeney's statuesquely frozen setters and pointers, defied spinal arthritis with back-cracking lifts of four-pound crappies from the Blow-Hole at Lake Sardis, and outbattled bass that would have struck at Jonah's whale for a mere popping-bug lure.

Oh, the years have been many and the years have been long! But somehow, driven slavelike by deadlines that dictate our private and columnar lives, the fabulous Buckingham and your correspondent have never been able to bracemate our wildlife questings. We haven't as yet been able to lie on our backs by placid waters or in bosky dells to watch buzzards wheel the azure dome—while we compiled the state of the nation. Biting off, meanwhile, quids of Picnic Twist and spraying to leeward, with apologies to no woman. Alas, with guns shouldered, we haven't tramped the fields or shivered in duck blinds to find that tranquillity of soul inhabiting no realm beneath the setting sun save God's great out-of-doors. But we shall; nay, we will.

There is one consolation, however. True, I have never hunted nor fished with Nash Buckingham in the flesh. But, like you and you and you, I've done both vicariously—through those deathless tales he has told in *De Shootinest Gent'man*, *Mark Right*, *Ole Miss*, *Blood Lines*, *Tattered Coat*—and now—*Game Bag*. They're all so true and alive that even if I never get to go, I can answer my own last horn without too many regrets. For he has given me a share in the rains, winds, sunshine, and high idealism of the true faith in nature.

Into these six works Nash Buckingham has breathed the breath of life. Here young or older will recognize an unfolding saga of our gunning and angling relationships, amiably and fearlessly depicted. I make so bold as to predict that some day this and the other books Nash Buckingham has written will enjoy a literary rating as enduring, if not more so, as some now used as educational exhibits in short-story writing. Right you

are, I'm stringing along with these tales of high-principled and purposeful men, great dogs, and anecdotes packed with properly spaced chuckles and heartthrobs. But of course! Some day Nash is going to take me fishing and/or shooting. He's just got to, folks. Didn't the wise guy once say—"Hope has got eternal springs"?

PAUL FLOWERS

P. S. He has taken me and now there is a new outdoor Richmond in the field.

GAME BAG



GIVEN ONLY TO THE HONORED

PAT, Hormel's Pat, in tribute to his memory and blood lines of his honorable ancestors, became our year-old Chesapeake Bay dog as the result of my reading even the "ads" of our obscure outdoor magazine one "bluebird" November morning on the upper gravel head of Ship Island sand bar. Settled comfortably in my pit, there was plenty of time for reading. Written from a country town in the sand hills of Nebraska (where, as a youth, I'd gunned wildfowl and pretty much everything else indigenous to that country), the ad somehow rang true. Intrigued, I wrote the man.

His reply, enclosing Pat's picture, taken with some youngsters in the family garden, listed a banker and minister as references. He explained Pat as already house- and yard-broken, well started on land and water game, and above all, sensible and courageous. He thrived on kindness, and experience would enrich and complete his education. In due course, Pat arrived. I loved him from the first moment I ever set eyes on his trusting, affectionate, and fearless ones.

The dog's superb physical condition, friendliness, and determination to please evidenced the best of previous handling. He knew "hup" and "sit" and moved blithely. If all dog deals were as clean-cut and fruitful as mine with the gentleman who sold me Pat, there would be fewer headaches among gun-dog men generally.

I wouldn't give two whoops for any dog I can't convert into a one-man animal. So Pat was immediately installed on a basis of what would amount today to a combination C card and carte blanche as to ration points and tires. Such a statement will probably wring yelps of outraged and scornful dissent from many of sport's training purists. But it's my personal way and has paid handsome dividends; so don't let's argue. Stick to your own methods if they make your dogs what Pat was to me. Our lovely setter, Lucy, welcomed young Pat graciously to the other ends of her hearth rugs, and all was well on the home front.

That summer Pat and Lucy shared my and Irma's out-of-doors completely. But indoors, Pat never learned to walk other than softly on slick, hardwood floors. Innocent romps invariably ended in embarrassing spills. Frozen, slippery duck marshes never gave him half as much trouble even when scurrying after a winged bird. He even became highly interested in fishing. The most difficult part of his finishing, if you could call it that, was to keep him quiet in boat or canoe while bream or bass were being played over the net.

Our greatest fear was that in running around lake and creek banks in summer, Pat might get snake-bit. But luck was with us, and by mid-August when Hal and I began checking on our several dove fields, the growing, sway-backed brown dog began taking full notice of the birds whose flightings obviously interested us. He instantly sensed doves as part of gunning enterprise, the gist of which, he strongly suspected, concerned

himself. And I might add that from the first moment of opening day, when he was put at "sit" out there just off the Williamson grove, Pat became a dove retriever whose fame spread the fields over.

Through ensuing years, under many difficult and even dangerous conditions in both familiar and strange regions, he and I gunned together with increasingly affectionate confidence. A practiced stalker, he belly-crawled sand bars, skulking the dips like a fox, or slinking like a wraith through thin cover. Amid corn and wheat patches he left me and circled downwind, actually driving game my way. If nothing flushed, he'd return almost apologetically.

But Pat would work only for me, Irma, or Horace, our colored duck-club-keeper with whom I sometimes left him. And he was devoted to Hal. Yep, those were surely happy years for Pat and me. I've shot mallards in the timber until the load became too heavy for me to pack and shoot too. So I'd hang six or eight across Pat's brawny saddle and lighten the burden. He sleeps beneath a matted rosebush tangle, in a tight casket buried high above floodwater on the old club's knoll. And above him through all eternity until trumpet time will, I hope, sweep increasingly flights of wildfowl that were part of his own fine being.

Somehow, though, I'll always remember Pat best by that day he and Hal and Horace and I shot the overflowed lower reaches of Roustabout towhead. Pat was gloriously in his prime. By today's standards every ounce of his eighty pounds was of championship caliber. But alas, in those days there were few if any established retriever trials. And the chances are Pat and I would have been too busy gunning, anyhow. I still judge all retrievers by Pat, with dear old Chub getting a draw on finished style. The day I'm relating came when Horace, having trudged

two miles to Squire Frank Williamson's plantation telephone, gave me the dope. His voice all but trembled with excitement.

Mist' Nash? Lissen, Mist' Nash—this is Ho'ace—yaas, suh—d' ducks done all gone t' d' river—but I done foun' 'em. D' river's floodin' d' whole en' o' Roustabout bar 'bove Norfolk. Ducks an' geese usin' in all dem overflowed corn fiel's an' wild pea patches. Chute water comin' in f'm Hog Pond is pow'ful, but we kin git across t' d' gut. We'll have a fine shoot if you an' Mist' Hal will jes' come. But be sho' an' bring Pat, he'll have t' ac' as d' principal agent in all th' high water. Da's fine, Mist' Nash, I'll be on d' lookout f' y'all 'bout suppertime." With Pat, burly as a grizzly, Hal and I were at the clubhouse before night-fall.

After a supper of Molly's "poke" tenderloins with cream gravy, grits, and deep-dish peach cobbler, with sumptuously fed Pat stretched on the moosehide rug in front of Lakeside's eight-foot fireplace, Horace revealed his completely mapped invasion plan. We followed every move of the campaign as his ramrod pointer traveled across the blackboard. "We'll leave d' car right heah—clear o' risin' water. I've got John d' fisherman's big skiff t' an' two pair o' oars right yonder—it'll take some hard pullin'. We'll take plenty o' duck an' goose decoys, an' walk down d' outside bar. Me an' John coulda kilt d' limit easy—yistiddy. D' pits is done dug. Y'all owes John a dollah apiece f' his skiff t' an' d' labor."

Before bedtime no detail of preparation was overlooked. A fascinating business, the decision of gunning's possibles as provident or impedimentary. Having rambled North America's shooting fields together, Hal and I believed in traveling light. Into our packs and Horace's went decoys, shells enough for legal limits of eight geese and twenty-five ducks (if and when); water bottle, camera, lunch, and the usual safety-first-and-pleasure-afterward

accessories. An automobile spade and plenty of heavy seine twine completed emergency details of our task force.

At three A.M. Horace eased in with hot shaving water, lit the fire and withdrew behind his customary admonition—"brekfus' ready time y'all is." Soon Molly's elephantine bulk moved noiselessly from stove to table side, proud of her coffee, poached eggs, butter-broiled country ham, and beaten biscuits. Pat, with a long, hard day ahead, had his share of table provender topped off with an extra bait of hamburger and two raw eggs. How I'd like to relive that same morning, with those faithful companions, sitting there in Molly's warm, spotless kitchen.

Our big car soon topped the towering Mississippi river levee. A raw-cold, moonless morning, bleak as the tomb, warned that weather-cats might jump any which-away. For several miles a rutty, buckshot road wound through second-growth, old river beds, and matted jungles. Hal braked at the peak of an upgrade. Ahead the road dipped sharply, and into the stillness crept hissing turmoil. The inexorable, tearing ravage of rising floodwater is an ominous sound, all the more in pitch dark. Where we stood had been the river's main bank a hundred years before. Now the gut water, a swirling sheet of bronze, loomed vaguely.

From water's edge Horace called back, "Heah's d' boat—water done riz 'bout a foot las' night, but d' car'll be safe up dere—but turn hit roun', Mist' Hal an' le's be headed f' freedom on d' safe side—jus' in case." We worked the big skiff through swishing willow tops and out onto furious current. Horace's oars held its head up until I could unship and bend my sweeps. Together we held our own and hit the far bank exactly where the roadway emerged onto the main bar's elevation. Locking the skiff to a cottonwood and hiding the oars, we shouldered packs and hiked down the sand bar's ridge.

Beyond it, to our right, lay a great deep lake being formed by

the chute's back-up water. To our left, the ever narrowing main sand bar dwindled toward its spearhead of sloping mud blocks and low switch willows. The farther we walked, the closer licked hungry Ole Miss, sniping and biting at every low spot across which she might gnaw and spew to reunion with the backwater. Abruptly we came to such a place, and Horace slowed uneasily.

"She's goin' thoo heah, an' not be long 'bout hit, neither. When she do we'll be on an islan', but I guess we kin' mek it back 'crosst dis afternoon." We stood amid false dawn. Across a dim sea of misty wide-water below us came goose music and thunder mutterings of restless duck myriads. Half a dozen pinwheels of river ducks suddenly winked past us against a rim of gray smoulder eastward. Where the cottonwood ridge bit off sharply, we stepped from clean sand onto rubbery mud blocks.

The pit was so well located and hidden that Horace had a few moments' hunt for it. He and John had made a perfect job of the dig, too. Top-layer mud blocks lifted out whole and used for willow-trimmed sighting shields. Underneath, half clay and sand prevented pit caving. There were comfortable dug-in seats and wall receptacles for supplies. One look and you knew that pit had been fashioned by an "old master."

Horace lofted a moistened finger. "Wind's fum d' south, Mist' Nash, le's set d' geese d'coys back heah an' d' ducks in d' aidge o' d' water creepin' up down yonder. Dat'll put 'em all to drappin' in 'ginst d' wind." The set was soon completed and spelled bad medicine for any visitors. Hal and I jumped into our commodious hide while Horace and Pat retired to the cottonwoods above us and hid among some logs and dwarf bush. They were perfectly hidden, held a commanding view, and there was a downhill start for Pat when needed. Horace was instructed to stop any and all cripples to save Pat's having to swim the deadly current on the towhead's far side.

Silvery water pushed uphill toward us and pools united. But our spot looked good for all day against the rise. "I hear geese travelin'," muttered Hal, an ear cocked southward—"there they are—swinging off yonder to our right—see?—they're over the shore line—they're straightening—look—get down—they've seen our profiles—they're leveling off—get down—easy does it." Knees bent while his eyes searched through protective willow stems—I saw his thumb push up his 12-bore Magnum's safety catch.

• Their excited chatter-gabble meant but one thing: they'd made the wind and were going to join up with us right now. Silence clamped down, and that, too, told its own story. It was now but a matter of heartbeats to zero. Hal and I hadn't doubled on game in twenty years; each knew what the other would do. Hal would let the first incomers rush past and settle to pull off their black boots, before he opened up. Another breathless second and, amid a burst of welcoming gabble, they literally covered us up. Their heavy pinions cracked like sails in a wind, and birds were actually overhead when I scored a right and left at less than thirty yards. Hal had done equally well, and we both reloaded in time to smash down third birds. One of these, however, required Pat's services. Six geese were not bad for a starter.

Hal was lighting himself a cigarette when Horace yelled, "Shoot 'em!" We came up fumbling, just in time to hear wing-whisk overhead and see a tremendous flock of mallards funneling into our ponded stool. Some had lit, others were trying to, while the remnants, wheeling overhead, saw us and lifted with alarm cries. Again it was like shooting fish in a barrel, but even so, Pat had an extended chase clean to the mud bar's point. He returned so highly elated that I decided to let him curl up by the pit. Some bent-down switch willows made him a nest. It was amazing to watch the dog lie there still as a mouse, nose to tail, while ducks and geese swung to the decoys.

The faint, staccato coughing of a motorboat drifted up-wind, and Hal leveled his binoculars. Ensued five hollow "whooping coughs" of autoloading gunfire over water. "Great Scott," exclaimed Hal, "that fellow's shooting from a motorboat and raising thousands of birds—that's against the law—gosh—there are two of 'em in the boat—listen." Another volley. A veritable swarm of waterfowl wove toward us, long, darker skeins of geese dragging slowly through the tinier mesh of duck nets. "Let's finish up on geese first," warned Hal, "there's more ducks around than we can use." Countless bunches of mallards, sprig, scaup, widgeon, teal, and gadwall hurtled overhead. But we sat there checking on the honkers. It was a sight such as few wild-fowlers ever see in a lifetime. We heard them lighting in our decoys.

"Great Kingdom-Come," whispered Hal, peeping—"Two big bunches of geese are heading directly in—not forty yards apart—they're going to light all over us—stand by for a crash—put an extra shell in your mouth—shoot carefully." A tremendous babel of giant gray and black shapes letting down their landing gear. "Okay," sang out Hal.

We could have water-raked one mob not twenty yards away, but waited for their alarm and pandemonium of a hundred clarioned alerts. It jams into one's ear at short range; I can still hear it after all these years. As a gang more to my left got air-borne, I shot twice just over a mass of writhing black necks. Several wilted. Hal's gun popped twice. Into our guns went the reloads and we all but came heads-on scrambling from the pit for the mop-up. I stopped one cripple legging it through the stems, while Pat rounded up another strong-running fugitive. The big Canada turned and struck at the dog with brave, powerful wings. But Pat, with the speed of a mongoose, dodged, darted in, and the struggle was quickly over. The



“Pat has challenged and battled every hazard and fury of the most powerful river on Earth.”

havoc wrought by Hal's and my 12-bore Becker Magnums with three-inch cases and an ounce and three-eighths of luballoyed fours, had been complete. Six more geese were propped among the decoys. That left us four more geese to bag, for Horace, John the Fisherman, and Squire Frank Williamson were shareholders in the enterprise.

By ten-thirty of that biting, cloudy forenoon, Hal suggested a count-up. Our bag stood at twelve geese and an even thirty "big" ducks. We had long since ceased firing at anything save mallards, sprig, or gadwall. Horace came down for the conference, and, as usual, talked common sense. "Le's pack d' geese an' ducks on up to d' boat an' save all dat hard work late dis evenin'. I'll warm y'all a snack, an' I know Mist' Hal got t' have his nap. We kin finish up down heah dis afternoon, easy. I'll bet d' decoys'll be full o' ducks an' geese whin we gits back." Horace was right. By two o'clock when we regained the pit, an enlarged water front and immediate decoys were black with ducks, and a gaggle of geese departed with them. The river had finally cut through the low place, and a ten-foot flowage, gaining momentum every instant, gushed into the lake. By the morrow a boat would be required to cross it.

Half an hour later the motorboat law-violators resumed operations. Through Hal's glasses we watched the fast craft dash upriver, whip above a duck raft, cut the motor, and suddenly sideslip with the current right in on top of the birds. There must have been extensions on their autoloaders, for now every unloading meant nearly twenty shots. Then followed an interlude for raking in the dead, and cripple-shooting. Their daylong depredations brought comment from Hal.

"Buck," said he, "you and I are enjoying probably our last wildfowl shoot under existing bag and possession limits. The violation we are witnessing is rampant all up and down this and

many other rivers of the nation, and enforcement is utterly inadequate. Commercialism has muscled in to take the place, practically ignored by the authorities, of old-time market gunning. At the present rate of fire power, plus the impending collapse of northern breeding areas, basic waterfowl resources simply cannot much longer withstand the pace."

I replied that my own national travels and observations substantiated his views. "And," I continued, "if we went back to town and reported the violation we're watching, we'd be told the government agent was out of town and that he didn't have a motorboat, anyhow. However, the matter would be reported." Hal came again—"My prediction is that less than three years from now the bag limit will be at around ten ducks and two geese, and that several migratory species will be on the closed list. Repeating and autoloading guns may have their magazine capacities curtailed, but that lobby is powerful and reaches into high-tension political dynamos. All conservation and water utilizations, commercialism, overshooting and game bootlegging need, is for some terrible drouth to strike the Canadian and upper U.S. marshes, where watertables are already badly lowered. If this happens, mark my word, duck shooting is worse than on the ropes."

And I recall something else the old boy said, sitting there in the goose pit, twitching his safety slide up and down, and puffing his cigarette between quick glances aloft or cockings of the ear for the slither of wings. "The day will come when crimes against wildlife will be punished like crimes against human life. What difference is there between game bootlegging of natural resources under the Lacey Act and violating the Mann or Narcotic Acts? Enforcement of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act should no longer be left with some little division of a federal bureau, equipped with a mere handful of wardens

to catch thousands of vandals. Enforcement of the Migratory Bird Law should pass to Justice or the F.B.I. Maybe the scum and chiselers would lay off then."

Hal passed on in 1933, but how prophetic were his thoughts. Bag limits began sliding, seasons were cut, baiting and live decoys went by the boards, and some species were put on the closed list. The great drouth, from 1929 through 1934, brought waterfowl to the very verge of decimation. After a bitter struggle, magazine gun capacities were curtailed on migratory game birds, and, in some states, on uplanders. Constant pressure by conservation groups somewhat improved law enforcement. The Emergency Waterfowl Program did a great job, and the fine work of Ducks Unlimited in Canada has, to all intents and purposes, saved the wildfowl for posterity.

It was past three o'clock before the sun fought its way through sky murk and changed the backbay's landscape. With it seemed to come the ducks, too. Sticking to our policy of big ducks only, Hal and I enjoyed some of the finest shooting of our careers. Pat was kept as busy as a bee. About four o'clock we had in a magnificent flock of geese that ended our honker limits for the day. But one duck was needed to check out that list, too. "Le's us pack up an' git t' d' boat," advised Horace. "Dark comin' quick befo' long, le's git back 'crosst dat ditch an' d' bad chute."

Backs packed, we hit the towhead trail. All at once, as a bunch of mallards swung over the cottonwoods, Hal's Magnum leaped to his shoulder. Two quick reports, and a hard-hit drake flared off, crumpled, and catapulted into the terrific current whirlpooling past the ridge. Just as we rushed over the embankment, Pat plunged headlong into the maelstrom, to disappear for dreadful minutes in its suction, and then bob up somewhat bewilderedly fifty yards downstream. Then, high-headed, he

began looking for his quarry. Our distracted shouts availed nothing; he'd spotted the mallard and was off, and, borrowing from the millrace, his powerful stroke bore him from sight through the willow tops. Hal looked at me aghast. "Gosh, Buck," he muttered, "I shouldn't have shot that duck—I'd rather jump in there myself than have anything happen to Pat." He meant it, too, he was that kind.

"Pat'll git back all right, Mist' Hal," comforted Horace. "Ef he don't find d' duck, he'll mek land somewhere an' fin' his way home." With sudden accord we hastened back to the tow-head's vantage point. Hal's glasses searched every foot of the mud bar's lower flooded forest. A dying sun bathed the ocean-like expanse in glowing, brassy resurgence.

"Yonder he is," shouted Hal, "I see him swimming—away down yonder—he's cut back out of the current into the back eddy—he's got the duck, too—Great Kingdom—he's nearly half a mile from here." Dropping the binoculars on their cord he began yelling "Here we are, Pat, here we are, old fellow, come on—man." By then, Horace and I had picked up the tiny speck, swimming strongly through and around channels studded with obstructions. We just stood there lost in wide-eyed, grateful admiration.

Pat's paws struck wading water and he stalked ashore, the mallard firmly in tender jaws. What a sight he made, shaking his burly form until the sunlit drops of muddy water turned to flecked gold and coppery mist. Hal waved his gun, dropped it, ran to the dog and threw an arm about his neck. Something whispered to me—"What more complete mission in life? His not to reason why, Pat has challenged the treacherous might of the most powerful river on earth. He's battled its every hazard and fury, and beaten down every obstacle its restless cunning

could devise. Yep, he's licked Ole Miss at her own game, with no odds or quarter asked or given."

So there, fellow wildfowlers, let me leave you Pat and your own memories of gun dogs with brains and courage. Pat, with his powerful chest heaving and sturdy, wide-bowed legs stuck deeply into dripping, chocolate bar-mud. Pat, with kindly eyes staring up into the all but tearful and thankful ones of his comrades. The last of God's sunshine for that rare day pouring warmth and glory upon his gallant soul.

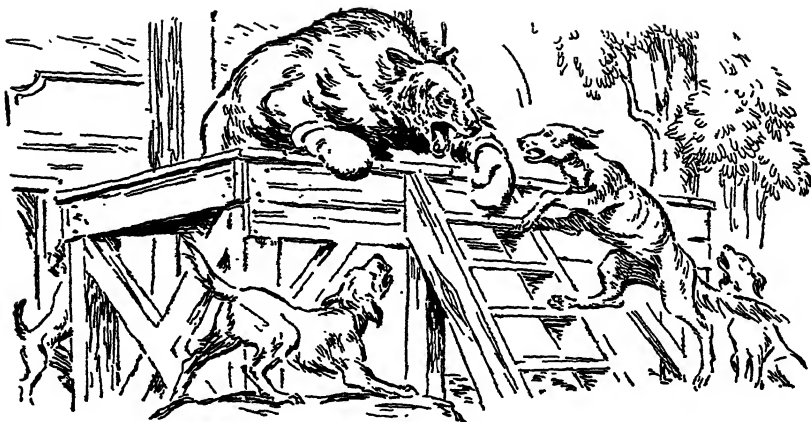
With that picture in mind, I'm recalling the closing lines from Harold Lamb's adventure story of mighty Sir Hugh of Taranto and his great blade Durandal—the Sword of Roland. When, with the rescued and lovely Princess Rusudan upon his shield arm, and bared Durandal in his grasp, Sir Hugh faced and won the undying admiration of Subotai Bahadur-noyon of Genghis Khan's Mongol horde. For there stood Hal and Horace and I, guns flung aloft in tribute, and then Hal, on his knees with an arm about Pat's sodden pelage.

"When Sir Hugh strode among them, a hundred arms were tossed weaponless over wild heads and crests, and from a hundred throats a roar went up—

‘AHAI—AHATOU—HAI’—

"It was salute to the Khan, only given to men who were honored above all others."

Pat and Hal and Horace have crossed over the river. So let my "Ahai-Ahatou-Hai" ring across to them.



THE GALLOWS-BEAR

NOW that our ancient and honorable Beaver Dam Ducking Club, its original moss-shingled, pecan-shaded home having long since gone the way of all cyclones, has been but recently repossessed by grandsons of the organization's first lessor, there is only gladness for its fate in the hearts of a remnant of grizzled sportsmen who knew choicest gunning and fishing thereabouts among hospitable and gracious neighbors.

It was the stalwart veteran, Dr. Owen, who in post-Civil-War decades set about hewing his parents' wilderness timber surrounding Beaver Dam lake (undoubtedly the centuries-agone bed of the Mississippi River) into princely plantation domain. So, for memories, along with photographs of the club's founders, I cherish its only logbook, some prints and paintings, and a large map depicting the lake's blinds and trails and pools. As a stripling I helped old Professor George Handwerker while he drew that map on Aun' Molly's dining-room table, and penned its legends in his exquisite print.

The names of Mangum, Irwin, Abbey, Owen, Owens, Leatherman, Woolfork, Houston, Montgomery, Salmon, Brooks, Tucker, Veach, Boyd, Clack, Fant, Withers, Robertson, Ussery, Penn, Norfleet, Kirby, Banks, Jacquess, Seabrook, Anderson, Quinn, and many others, good and true, ring back across the years. And if, for me, locusts ate said years, I'm obliged to them. Profoundly the happiest ones of my life have taproots about old Beaver Dam. For there I found my true-love, and "mony's the canty day there, we've spent thegither."

Truly, our old-timers' hearts are lifted by the Doctor's grandsons' taking over the lake. They were not born when we first gunned and angled their ancestral woods and waters, but we know they'll continue to play the game to the end that they, their children, and their children's progeny will enjoy the blessings that spring inevitably from watchfulness and care of soils, waters, forests, and wildlife.

Who knows? Generations hence the stately cypresses and lordly hardwoods we knew may tower again as forest primeval. Canebrakes, deeply carpeted in leaf-mold and all but impenetrable with barricades of thorny bamboo entanglements, could whelp myriads of fur-bearers. Beaver dams could again raise water levels beneath whose permanency, beds of aquatic-naturals would spawn bass, crappie, bream, shad, grindle, gar, and buffalo fish in pristine profusion. Loveliest of all could be return of squadrons of stately swans, cloud banks of white and blue herons; to say nothing of acres upon acres of lake bed spread with the elephantine leaves and purest yellowed ivory of the Golden Lotus bloom. May young eyes see again cool dawn-mists rising from those waters, and long skeins of wood ducks woven against sunsets!

Many a night in my early youth and manhood, I've lain awake in one of Beaver Dam's four high, wide, and softly enfolding

walnut double beds, and drifted off to sleep to lullabies of meandering hound melody. Mayhap it was merely the close-up, hysterically frenzied mouth-pother of some darky pusher's fighting-mad coon mongrels. If so, having headlighted behind most of them, I'd lie there in the blankets' soft warmth trying to sort out tonal personalities. Visualizing, meanwhile, flarelit choppings, wedge-maulings, and general all-around hullabaloo when the fight started down in lakeside jungles.

The Beaver Dam locale was powerfully desperate big-timber country in those times. Pioneering settlers and broad-hatted planters in butternut and jeans shivered with chills and detested formality of the chase. But they were hunters from their own and their dogs' hearts. They bred and broke and fed and good-naturedly stole one another's dogs. They bragged on their top bear and deer hounds and would sooner kill you about one such than over a section of land.

Each pack, however nondescript, comprised a company of canine daredevils not averse to treeing, baying, striking, or mixing it with anything from antler-bearers to the "sweet or stinking fute" of panther or bobcat. True, somewhat dismaying formalities of the drag or hunt breakfasts have succeeded the bear-hacks and rough stuff of the Swamp Angels, and have them worried. But our fox hunters have stuck to their own Mendel's Law in hound breeding and customs. Redcoat or Hillbilly, theirs are rightful missions of gentility. Let them forever ride their walls and fences! Or build up fires on ridge tops to listen and argue and chaw and spit until stouthearted Reynards are brushed off or gone to earth.

Who remembers those trackless reaches of open turkey woods from the Dooley timber on across to the Bennett field? The great, still forests around old Walnut Lake? And farther east the Tallahatchie River bottoms, much of whose timber fell to

Bob Carrier's crews while the Ames and Avent hounds enjoyed the generous Bob's hospitality in camps the like of which will ne'er be known again? Regions of intercepting slashes and ridges along which bear and deer "used" unhounded log crossings? Matted morasses where panthers prowled and laired uneasily?

Only men who still deeply love the esprit de corps and devil-may-care carousings of long-ago camp life and its Dutch-oven provender remember such country for its true worth and heart-warming beauty. And dwell, too, upon all-night vigils on bare, rain-swept ground. Tooting with forlorn melancholy while lurching through gumbo mire in quest of lost dogs. Listening dull-brained and despairingly for receding or envolumed drift of bayings. Or maybe, faintly borne to them, the braconiers forloyned. Such men knew and still know the facts of life as to hounds and hunting. And what's more in such case, their hounds know they know them, too.

Be the truth known as to etiquette of Venery, only men who can triple-tongue some Borstall's horn, blow intelligently down a gun barrel, decode hollow log-thumpings, and interpret darky lingo from behind night-barred cabin doors, have the full respect of their hounds. For under such code, men and hounds have struck spoor, trailed, held, fought, fed, hungered, thirsted, and bred together about caves and homesteads since before time began. This will hold true, too, until after time ends, for Gabriel will have to work overtime blowing them back together. Their association is one of the few great faiths that will be recognized and judged before the Throne. What finer partnership for man than with his true pack?

Horace, our colored major-domo at Beaver Dam Ducking Club, told the late Hal Howard and me the story of the Gallows-Bear one night when we were right in the middle of a

three-day hunt that included a bit of everything in the way of ducks, geese, quail, snipe, and woodcock. I identify the date and occasion by our having that day raised the largest bevy of bobwhites either of us ever saw, before or since. Molly was cooking for us then, and the club's negro paddler entourage included, as regulars, Bubbin, Fred, Jess, and Two-Man. And Two-Man, a featured player in the test by fire-water of the Gallows-Bear and hounds, sat there that evening and swore up and down to Horace's deposition as "d' whole trufe." Two-Man meant it. He was obviously as proud of his role, and no bit-part either, in that picture, as a little nigger with a long navel.

Hal and I moved that biggest quail bevy during a wholly explorative bird hunt behind the main Mississippi River levee protecting Mr. Selden's plantation, a couple of miles above the hamlet of Austin. We drove a two-mule buggy eight long, muddy miles from Beaver Dam, and hunted behind Tom Cotton and Joe. Tom's famed double-nose got an outstanding workout that sunny afternoon, with bold Joe in a photo finish for pointing honors between pointers. That shoot's details are more or less photographically recorded in my oldest kodak book. Afternoons like that one happen just once in a gunner's life. Cum grano salis or credo quia absurdum to the contrary, it is quite all right by me and Hal, I'm sure.

Having hitched our stalwart brayers in soft-straw stalls with well-grained troughs, we interviewed the plantation's colored straw boss and were informed, after considerable medicine making, that "a big hover o' pottiges visits down yonder beyon'st d' pastoo' whar d' alpaca patch runs 'longside dat new groun' an' dem pea plantin's." We sighted low woods pretty well thinned and bordered with switch cane. Inured to such polite optimism, we applied the usual trade discounts, made a rather



"Tom's famed double-nose got an outstanding workout that sunny afternoon."



*The picture is a copy of the original
and is not a reproduction of the original
but a copy of the original. The picture is
a copy of the original and is not a reproduction
of the original. The picture is a copy of the
original and is not a reproduction of the
original.*

THIS PICTURE IS IN THE POSSESSION OF
THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON, AND IS
PRESERVED IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY
BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

"A scene, I told myself, as ageless as God's wrath."

alluring cash deposit on account, and also made sure that our host got a flash of Hal's pocket flask. We then whistled Joe and Tom their getaway.

They disappeared beyond the pastoo', and having skirted some wet thicket, we spotted both dogs at the edge of new ground—pointing staunchly but in opposite directions. They were fifty feet apart, but a novice could have told that each had game. Tom was the more colorful and stylish fellow, a very whip of a dog and without a grain of jealousy in his fine nature. Joe perhaps lacked Tom's pace and range, but he had plenty, and on quail or game of any type he was a cold-nosed, steely-eyed killer without remorse. His friendship was of the deepest caliber; the quiet, utterly loyal type that brands the one-man dog. What wouldn't I give for another such pair? Well, there they stood! Two bebies maybe, or just a bunch with a straggler or two pinned by the other dog. Such occurrences were a dime a dozen in our young but hardened shooting lives.

But before we could orient, quail began rising in a half circle beyond the new ground's rim of weeds and trampled corn. Twos, fives, tens—with others checking our right and left until Hal and I and the two pointers just stood there open-mouthed—and we two with lowered guns. Fully a hundred or more bobwhites sailed along the woods edge ahead and lowered into short cover outside the new ground. Hard-bitten killers that we were, our quartet was shocked into silence. Then Hal, with his usual sanity and composure, said—"That beats all hell, but don't let's stampede—this is uncanny—take it easy." Tom and Joe, ordinarily bombproof sleuths, were a bit on Queer Street and listened in. They, too, had been stirred to their depths by that roaring rise and were not quite sure they had seen and heard aright. You don't believe some bird dogs hear distant flushes and sense their meaning? Well, you have something to learn.

Strategy and tactics mapped, we briefed our companions, heeled them, and tramped at the alert to within fifty yards of where we suspected the cover to be booby-trapped with singles. Then Tom and Joe were softly clucked into action. Stealthy, lithe spotters, they stole through the knee-high peas and crab grass interspliced with cane switches. They were perfect pictures of everything a pair of perfectly broken bird dogs should be, and we sensed no need for alibis on their parts. Hal and I had gunned together so long that single-birding had become an almost second-nature science. No unnecessary talk, no frustration or tendency to dog excitement. "Turn about and cover each other," whispered Hal from the corner of his mouth, "only two shells—look out—Joe's down."

Even as he spoke, Tom, too, curved tensely. His square muzzle dilated with what was obviously breast-high scent. Hal strode swiftly in and tumbled a rising cock bird ahead of the steady dog. At his nitro's crack two birds flushed ahead of Joe. I let them both down, and our dogs beelined a trio of crafty fetches. We advanced warily. I have no idea of taking you on a shot-by-bird account of what ensued. After a lapse of forty years it is still vivid but still a bit unbelievable, too.

Within three furlongs we garnered two state-game-law limits of twenty-five quail each, while probably thrice that number of birds flushed wild ahead or off to our sides in new bebies or scattered singles. We ended just within the thin woods and more open new ground. I am confident we lost no cripples, for the retrieving of Tom and Joe was flawless and Hal and I managed our composure well under such circumstances. We each had two boxes of shells when we began firing. We had forty-four left, fifty quail, and that figured six hulls unaccounted. Driving home, we sized up the situation as follows. The river was high. The bayou encircling the plantation was flooding. We were

on a long ridge covered with food and escape cover. A tremendous quail population had been shoved into concentration.

I have never seen nor expect to see the like of that again. But the tale's strangest slant is that neither Hal nor I ever returned to gun the Selden plantation. Why? Because in those days eight miles was a long piece to drive and we had plenty of birds closer to Beaver Dam. So now, getting on with the story of the Gallows-Bear, here we are after one of Molly's most succulent suppers, with Hal and me and Horace and Two-Man planning tomorrow's duck hunt. I can see those two dark worthies sitting there in their cane-bottomed chairs, colored men of probably as fine a type as their race will ever produce. Horace, strong, well proportioned, and extremely intelligent, was also level-headed and vastly loyal. Two-Man, a veritable colossus in ebony, had as gentle and sunny a nature as I've ever seen; he wouldn't harm a kitten and was a devoted homebody. Both men, then approaching their forties, lived for long and passed on with the affection and respect of their lifelong white employers.

One could learn considerable about a great many things just sitting there listening to Horace and Two-Man exchange views on life around a great hunting and fishing lake and its countryside. Their individual philosophies of life, too, were based upon a workaday knowledge of the Scriptures far in advance of Hal's and mine. They saw things in daylight that we never even suspected of nature, and at night they suspected nature of things about which we didn't even dream. When it came to planning a tomorrow's shoot, final measures were invariably deployed until the next morning's wind direction was analyzed. "No matter how many ducks you sees usin' a place dis afternoon," Horace used to tell Two-Man, "if d' sailin' and glidin' wind ain' so dey can use it right next mawnin', you ain' gonna do no

good dere." Well, that night Two-Man was expecting Bubbin by with his coon dogs, and if our conversation were sufficiently prolonged, there would be an inevitable dividend of Brooklyn Handicap toddy for the three of them. The talk drifted to hounds, and Horace, for the first time, related the epic of "The Gallows-Bear."

"Well, suhs," began Horace, "speakin' o' houn's remin's me— an' I know hit do Two-Man, too, 'bout d' time whin dese big woods wuz jes' bein' opened up an' mos' all d' white folks kep' packs. But right in dese p'ticler parts 'twarn't no real bear dawgs. But dey wuz still considerbul bears. Dey got so bad 'bout killin' hawgs an' wreckin' roastin'-ear patches dat Mist' Berry Brooks an' Mist' Tom Salmon decided dey wuz gonna do sump'n 'bout dat. An' whin dem two put dey haid's t'gether on a projec', hit wuz better'n half done." Horace turned to the gigantic Two-Man and received a nod of solemn affirmation.

"So dey sent t' Tennessee somewhar an' bought 'em a passel o' houn's whut wuz said t' be d' fines' bear dawgs in d' lan'. Dey wuz bred an' broke by d' same gent'man as later sent some o' dat same breed t' Africa t' run nuthin' but lions. Some peoples claimed dem dawgs had bloodhoun' in 'em, but I didn'. I b'lieves bloodhoun's is d' mos' overrated dawgs whut dey is. Dem dawgs Mist' Tom an' Mist' Berry bought wuz long-legged, pow'ful, sorta jimber-jawed, hard-eyed houn's. Dey could really trumpet. D' man say if dey runned ennything 'cep'n bears t' sen' 'em on home. Wid 'em he sent two ugly, pow'ful dawgs he said wuz worriers. After d' houn's had d' bear slowed, dey nipped eroun' an' worried d' bear t' death mighty near." Two-Man quaked with mountainous mirth at that recollection.

"Until Mist' Berry an' Mist' Tom impo'ted dem bear houn's, all wuz reasonably peaceful roun' d' county seat o' Landon. D' railroad hadn' been long thoo dem parts, an' Landon had jes'

one street an' a long row o' frame stores. Dey wuzn' er brick buildin' in town. 'Bout ev'y third store wuz er saloon. Dey all faced d' deppo an' freighthouse. An' d' Main street wuz sho' full o' deep mudholes. Ev'ybody toted pistols, an' whin a white man finished eatin' a can o' oysters in a store an' th'ow'd d' empty out in d' street, fo' or five mens shot at hit befo' hit quit rollin'." Horace almost ducked for cover recalling such bursts.

"D' bear houn's 'rived on d' mawnin' Limb-Dodger an' caused er worl' o' excitement. Mist' Tom an' Mist' Berry an' me an' Two-Man met d' shipment an' opened d' crates. We chained d' dawgs in Squire Robertson's barn an' fed an' watered 'em. Mist' Berry made 'rangements t' have 'em exercised an' watched till we could take 'em out to Mist' Tom's plantation nex' day. Ev'ybody wuz wonderin' an' bettin' would or wouldn't dey run nuthin' but bears. Dem houn's created mo' excitement den d' hangin' scheduled f' nex' week. D' gallows wuz all built in d' grove east o' d' Cotehouse. Hit wuz d' firs' white man t' be hanged in d' county, an' a lot o' folks wuz bettin' whether he'd be pardoned or dat in sech case whether d' murdered man's folks wouldn't raid d' jail an' settle d' feud on a mo' pussonal basis." Hal fetched an unopened quart of Brooklyn Handicap from his locker. The overhead lamp dilated the ornate golden finery of its trimmings. A palpable wave of stimulus shot through our company.

"Well, gent'mens, d' nex' day wuz Sadday, an' you knows how niggers pours into town t' gang up an' visit eroun', eat snackhouse an' sip a li'l gin? Jes' befo' noon ev'y colored-folks eatin' place wuz jammed an' d' back room at Mist' Briggum's honky-tonk wuz overflowin'. He had a jug-band a-playin', an' dem black folks wuz really reelin' an' rockin'. Mist' Berry an' Mist' Tom watched me an' Two-Man feed dem houn's, an' we

all fo' come out o' Squire's barn an' turnt into d' main road jes' dis side o' Mist' Briggum's rest'rant.

"Hit wuz er long, low, one-story shotgun-built place. D' front half wuz er fine whisky bar wid some tables eroun' f' food. Den come a partition, an' back o' dat d' colored folks got dey vittles an' likker. Mist' Joe done er lan'-office business. Didn't tolerate no foolishness roun' his place f'm white or black. If dey et an' drank wid Mist' Joe Briggum, dey had t' behave or start runnin'. He tried oncet t' hire Two-Man f' bouncer in d' nigger side. But Two-Man say he love peace an' liberty an' life too well. D' front part o' d' saloon wuz sho' decorated wid beautiful mirrors an' rows o' colored glasses. D' walls wuz hung wid pictures an' deers' heads." Unable to stand the pressure, Two-Man asked timidly if the tumblers and sugar bowl were needed.

"Jes' then," Horace resumed, "a big wagon pulled up at d' hitchin' rack in d' grove crosst d' street f'm Mist' Briggum's. Two fine gray mules pulled d' outfit, an' dey harness wuz all gol'-studded. A cage wid bars set in d' wagon, an' d' driver wuz er hefty gent'man wid long mustaches an' a high, clown-lookin' hat. Mist' Berry stop an' snap his fingers. 'Gre't grief,' he say, 'Tom, yonder comes ol' Murad Bey an' his trained Russian bear—d' one dat dances an' does all dem tricks.' He say—'Dat gives me an idea—we kin now see will dem houn's run er bear.' Mist' Tom say—'Whut you got in mind?'

"Me an' Two-Man well knowed 'bout Mist' Murad Bey an' his bear. Dey comed thoo Landon ev'y so often. D' bear, he'd wear Mist' Bey's high hat on d' side o' his haid, shuffle an' dance, lay down an' roll over, an' drill wid er wooden gun. Den him an' Mist' Bey'd rassle an' have er boxin' match wid gloves on, an' after dat, d' bear, he'd do er hootchie-cootchie an' pass er tambourine f' d' whites an' blacks t' toss money in.



I AM HERE AND HERE
 THIS PRINT HUNG IN THE ORIGINAL
 BARBER DANCE CLUB EVANSVILLE MISS. 1879
 PRESENTED TO MUD LAKE CLUB 1935
 BY NASH SULLIVAN

"May young eyes see again cool dawn mists."



C. H. HALL AND WILD TO
 2 - 2 PRINT PLUG IN THE ORIG. VILL.
 BEAVER DAM CLUB EVANSVILLE MISS. 1877
 BECAME TO MUD LAKE CLUB 1933
 BY J. A. BUCHANAN

“And long skeins of wood ducks woven against sunsets.”

Ef d' bear done his act right good, Mist' Bey'd give 'im a bottle o' sugar-water.

"Mist' Berry tol' me—'You an' Two-Man go rope up d' houn's an' lead 'em 'bout here whar we's standin'.' He tell Mist' Tom, 'I'll go git Mist' Bey's bear er bottle o' sugar-water an' mek hit strong wid gin. I'll give hit to 'im jes' befo' d' act starts—I knows Murad well. By d' time d' bear gits thoo dancin' d' hootchie-cootchie, d' gin'll be workin' plenty. I'll stan' on d' outside o' d' crowd, an' whin you-all sees me wave my handkerchief, turn dem houn's loose right yonder whar d' bear hopped outa d' wagon. Dey'll follow his trail on down t' Mist' Briggum's an' we'll den see whut we done bought an' whut dem worrier dawgs is good fer.'" Hal began corkscrew manipulations with the Brooklyn Handicap and for an instant Horace's theme sagged.

"Mist' Tom an' me an' Two-Man waited till we seen Mist' Berry come outa d' saloon an' talk'er li'l wid Mist' Bey an' give him d' bottle. Mist' Bey give hit to d' Russian bear, an' he tipped hit up an' smacked his chops whin hit wuz empty. Mist' Bey put d' muzzle back on 'im an' fixed d' chain in his collar an' d' act started. Den me an' Mist' Tom an' Two-Man wint to d' barn, divided up d' houn's, an' led 'em a sorta roundabout way to d' bear wagon. No sooner did d' firs' dawgs tetch d' bear's scent befo' dey th'owed back dey huids, opened up wide, an' lit out t'wards d' crowd eroun' Mist' Briggum's front door.

"We couldn'a helt dem dawgs. D' crowd heerd 'em bayin' an' seen 'em comin', an' broke an' fled everwhicherway. *G-r-e-a-t I Am!* White folks jammed all up in d' front saloon, an' d' back part wuz chock full o' niggers. D' bear an' Mist' Bey had jes' finished rasslin', an' Mist' Bey had put d' boxin' gloves on d' bear—whin d' storm broke. D' bear musta bin feelin' his gin, 'cause whin d' houn's wuz fixin' t' pounce on 'im, he started

tryin' t' tip his hat wid d' gloves on. 'Bout den dem worriers hit 'im an' nipped. D' bear pulled away fum Mist' Bey, dropped on all fours, give a big snarl, an' run into d' saloon. He turned over chairs an' tables an' hopped up on d' bar. D' barkeep thowed a bottle at 'im an' dat really started d' riot." Horace paused and brought his cigarette papers and tobacco sack into play.

"D' houn's an' d' worriers wuz jumpin' off chairs an' tables tryin' t' tie in wid d' bear up on d' bar. But ev'y time one made it dat far, d' bear 'd swipe wid er mighty uppercut an' knock 'im ceilin' high. He could sho' th'ow punches wid either han'. Sometimes he'd have two-three dawgs in d' air at d' same time. If hit hadn't bin f' dem boxin' gloves, he'd a' kilt ev'y dawg he hit. Oncet d' bear runned to d' partition an' looked over like he wuz fixin' t' clamb into d' nigger side. D' niggers to' off 'window sashes an' doors leavin' d' place. Mist' Bey, he wuz standin' 'mongst d' saloon wreckage wavin' d' wooden gun, yellin' an' shakin' d' tambourine. But d' bear didn't pay him no min'; he done 'bout run out o' dawgs.

"All at oncet d' bear jumped off d' bar, thoo d' door, an' lit out acrosst d' railroad track, past d' Cotehouse, an' on thoo d' grove. D' houn's right after 'im. Mist' Bey, he run out, too, but some o' d' houn's split off an' took out in behin' 'im. Las' thing I seen o' Mist' Bey, he wuz jes' disappearin' in d' cornfiel'. Two-Man say—'Whut yu reckon dem houn's is doin', runnin' Mist' Bey?' An' I say—'Well, him an' d' bear eats an' sleeps an' rassles t'gether, so I guess dey mus' smell alike.'

"D' bear kep' on till all of a sudden he run into d' gallows. Two carpenters wuz nailin' on d' crossbeam, but dey heered d' ruckus an' seen d' bear comin'. Whin d' bear run up d' gallows steps, dem carpenters took off thoo space. Two-three houn's tried t' follow d' bear up d' gallows, but he jes' turned roun'

an' swung rights an' lefs' wid d' gloves. D' worriers decided dey done done dey duty, so d' whole bunch jes' set aroun' d' gallows an' went t' barkin'. Somebody shouted dat d' white prisoner whut wuz gonna be hung done escaped, an' heah come d' High She'iff wid an' armed posse. Somebody holler t' shoot d' bear.

"'Bout den d' other dawgs brought Mist' Bey outa d' adjoinin' cornfiel', but he beat 'em to d' gallows jes in time t' mount d' gallows steps an' plead f' d' bear's life. D' High She'iff say—'Well, all right, but you better talk to 'im an' git some sense in his haid.' He say—'We got t' have nuthin short o' unconditional surrender.' Mist' Bey wouldn't go quite up to d' bear, but he done some tall pleadin'.

"Finally he tell me an' Two-Man—'Go drive my team an' wagon under dis heah gallows trap door, an' one o' you git me another bottle o' sugar-water.' Whin d' sugar-water come, I had done put plenty mo' gin in hit. D' bear come an' got d' bottle f'm Mist' Bey, turn hit up, an' suck d' las' drop. In er minit or so he begin doin' d' hootchie-cootchie an' set down on d' trap door an' begin pattin' his paws. Two-Man drove d' wagon right under d' trap, an' Mist' Bey runned down an' opened d' cage. D' High She'iff sprung d' trap an' d' bear fell in d' cage. Mist' Bey slammed d' door shet, but Two-Man had er hard time keepin' dem mules f'm wreckin' d' wagon whin dey smelt dat bear. D' High She'iff den made a speech f'm d' gallows 'cause 'lection time wuz approachin'.

"Mist' Bey drove on back t' Main Street. Mist' Berry an' Mist' Tom an' me an' Two-Man had done roped d' dawgs an' tied 'em up in d' Squire's barn. Mist' Tom an' Mist' Berry knowed dey wuz sho' some hard settlin'-up t' be did. Mist' Berry say—'Tom, us better beat 'em to d' draw befo' dat shyster lawyer whut settled here recently gits sicked on us—we's fixin' t' git

hell sued outa us.'” Horace drew a long pull on his cigarette, while Two-Man, at Hal’s direction, went to the kitchen and fetched two tumblers. From across the new ground came the winding of approaching coon hunter Bubbin’s horn.

“Me an’ Two-Man wint up an’ peeped in d’ bear’s cage. Dar he laid, wid his haid on dem boxin’ gloves an’ er smile on his face. D’ gin had ’im, an’ he wuz fas’ asleep. Two-Man say—‘Well, dat Russian bear didn’ have no boots on to pass out wid, but dem boxin’ gloves wuz all he needed.’ Mist’ Tom an’ Mist’ Berry got ol’ Mist’ Bey off in d’ grove an’ settled wid ’im f’ fifty dollars. He hadn’t had no time t’ pass d’ tambourine an’ collect f’m d’ audience, an’ besides, dey never did find d’ high clown bear’s hat an’ d’ wooden gun an’ d’ tambourine. Some niggers mussa got away wid dem.

“Whin dey finished wid Mist’ Bey, dey met wid Mist’ Briggum. He took stock o’ d’ damage in his place an’ dey paid him er hunnerd dollars f’ busted glasses, windows, an’ chairs. Jes’ t’ make hit certain dey wuzn’ no comeback, Mist’ Berry an’ Mist’ Tom tol’ Mist’ Briggum t’ order two cases o’ d’ fines’ likker an put hit in d’ bill. An’ dey took receipts in writin’ f’m all parties. Den dey all set down to a big feast. Me an’ Two-Man wuz’ tol’ t’ order whut us wanted f’m d’ back kitchen, an’ us sho’ boarded heavy, too. I heerd Mist’ Tom tell Mist’ Berry—‘Well, Berry, hit cos’ us some dough t’ fin’ out will them dawgs run er bear, but we sho’ got d’ right answer.’ Mist’ Berry say—‘Yes, an’ I wuz worse worried ’bout ol’ man Bey den I wuz ’bout d’ bear.’”

Hal poured a half-pint of Brooklyn Handicap into a lemonade pitcher, sugared, watered, and juiced it to taste. Two tumblers of this concoction became almost immediately history. Two-Man and Horace quaffed their drams with near perfervid expressions of good will towards our future healths and happi-

ness. The remainder of the near-Saratoga-Sour was reserved for sharing with Bubbin after the coon hunt. Hal and I were soon amid the blankets, and an intense, moonless silence settled upon the clubroom's smoke- and liquor-spiced interior. Suddenly my companion spoke across the darkness.

"Buck, I been thinking about that poor bear when he come to. You ever had a real bad gin hangover?"

"Naw, have you?"

"One!" I heard Hal groan.

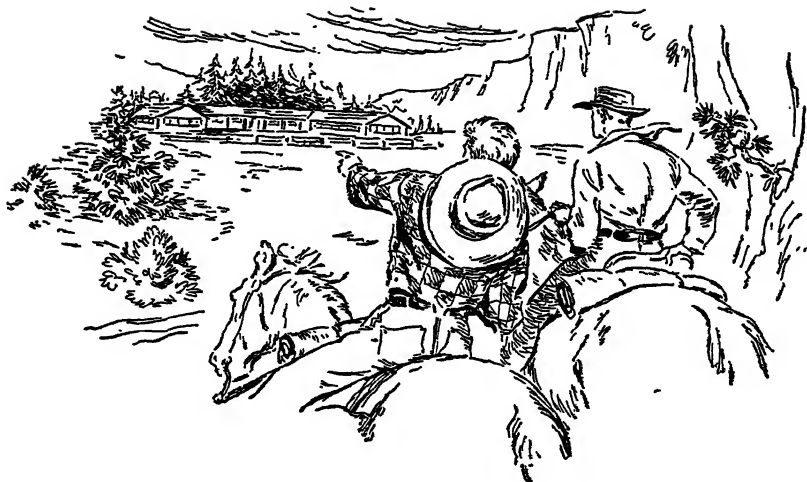
"What was it like?"

"Combination of oral bubonic plague and impounded atomic cerebral detonation."

"*W-h-a-a-t?*"

"It was a bear."





GHOST TROUT

NAMES of persons and places in this yarn may be coincidental, but its facts are not fiction. If clues crop out in this episode or escapade (or whatever you choose to call it, including a damned lie), have it your way. You may be right, but it happened just like Billy Mex and I saw it. We left the Springs before daylight to ride across Colorado's White River Plateau and down to our ranch on Beaver Crick; a long day's cow-ponying in those days before automobiles stetched our valley. Ours had been a week's holiday three months shy of haircuts. Swims in the hot sulphur pool untied a lot of kinks from range riding, too, to say nothing of cooling libations and waltzes (yep, I said waltzes) with lovelier partners than many of today's "pin-ups"!

That afternoon on the Flat Tops was unpleasantly warm. We ambled along half asleep on the broncs, Prince and Cub. Behind us thunder muttered at intervals, but that wasn't unusual.

In those altitudes you could get snowed or hailed or rained on at the drop of a five-gallon Stetson. Northward, a magnificent panorama of peaks and lesser humps piled mountain ramparts across the horizon. Great flashes and patches of sunhine and shadow chased themselves across seemingly half a world beneath us. Midway toward the Bear's Ears across the Wyoming line, Sleepy Cat's overlording heights towered like a blue-black gun sight. Billy Mex nodded awake, yawned a look-around, and birthed an idea.

"Tell you what I'll do with you—just once—cowboy."

"Speak up, little one, you are among friends."

"We'll turn off here, drop into yonder gulch toward Lost Solar, and ride a beeline across country toward Sleepy Cat. Just to see where we strike the valley. Are you on?" He checked Cub and squinted the proposed cutoff's angle as against the road's thirty-mile loop. "Jes' up-an'-down an' up-an'-down—like that," he added.

"You're on, compadre, let's ride to High Adventure." The sun was suddenly doused and on three sides we found ourselves being walled in by increasingly dense, black clouds. A hot, sulphurous breath stole across the Flat Tops. Crossing the open, we stiff-legged the ponies off a steep hogback and hopped them on down through thick buckbrush and a smattering of blue spruce into some elk weed parks. Smack-dab into a bunch of elk, too. Billy waved to the heavily beamed herd bull and promised to look him up, come open season.

Lower, we came onto a great spring, gushing from beneath a precipitous cliff, with quite a bunch of cattle hanging around its apron. Follow water downhill long enough and you're bound to come out—somewhere. Lightning began jabbing at us, and thunder, jarring shale-slides, stampeded the critters. Billy and

I tightened our saddlebags, which were full of candy and magazines, and donned fishskin slickers.

"It's fixin' t' rain wuss'n th' town pump on washday," opined Billy. "Le's us git under sump'n thick—quick."

Ten minutes downhill, we struck a small corral, remnants of drift fence, and dim cart tracks. The big spring above had by now become a gorgeous trout stream. Along the trail well above it along the sidehill, we raced pell-mell. But a trout fisherman's eye somehow takes stock of willowed reaches and meadowed cut banks where he just knows swirling waters break into glassy pools. We dove into a canyon, and beneath its walls visibility dwindled to practically nil. Our mounts, warned by animal instinct of impending trouble, whinnied with increasing nervousness. Ranch outposts appeared and the canyon dwindled. It took all we could do to restrain Prince and Cub from bolting in wild-eyed terror. We emerged into a meadowed valley, rock-rimmed on both sides and all but blotted out from wall to wall.

"Look," shouted Billy, pointing across the crick. Looming through the gloom, a pretentious ranch lodge was visible against a conifered cove let into the valley's rim. Just then two jagged clouds met head on above us and a tremendous reverberation all but jarred us from our saddles. A storm of hailstones the size of walnuts slugged us half groggy in an instant. With singing heads we spurred under a shed providentially hard by. We risked lightning, but anything was better than getting one's brains beaten out.

The meadow, heaped with hail, whitened. Leaden light struggled through a rising ceiling, and the stones ceased in favor of a cloudburst. Two hundred yards from our shelter, we saw the trout stream leave its banks and spread toward us. Uprooted snags dotted the swirling flood. Half an hour of that and the

overhead became a sodden drizzle. I favored hitting for home, but Billy decided to see who lived in the big lodge. After a while he caught up with me.

"I had to swim that crick—damn if I know whether anybody lives in that joint or not—it's all boarded up—I don't like the dump."

There was a lot of lightning damage to haystacks in our valley; we saw the fires, because it took us till long after night getting home.

Next morning, while repairing fences down the meadow, Billy blurted: "Buck, when I rode up to that lodge yesterday afternoon, there were lights in it, I could see 'em behind the boards across the windows—sort of blue lights. When I got closer they dimmed out. Who th' heck you suppose lives there, anyway?"

I said I didn't know or care, but I knew that crick sure looked like virgin big-trout water to me, and that for two cents or less I'd ride all the way back up there just to ask permission to fish in it. All they could do, I argued, would be to turn us down. In such case, we could go on down the main White and try to snake a record rainbow out of heavier water. Billy said that would suit him to a tee-Y-dee summa cum, if Hughie could spare him off a few days. Hughie said that would register in the affirmative with him, provided we cut across under Burro Mountain and scouted some deer country against open season. With a pack horse along, we dropped into the strange valley from behind, and judging from the number of big bucks we jumped in the high down-timber country Hughie wanted inspected, the territory looked prime.

We hit the crick about two miles below the strange lodge. There were still traces of the cloudburst, but the water was crystal again and tumbled along as though nothing ever had

happened to roil its beautiful bends, shelving riffles, open-meadow spirals, cutbanks, and willow chasms. Some of the log jams were helter-skeltered and piled higher onto others. At one particularly inviting stretch of water we succumbed. Billy kept remarking the absence of horse and used wagon tracks. "Whoever these dudes are," he muttered, "they sure keep pretty much to themselves—funny we've never even heard of this layout."

With the nags on picket in a grassy gulch, we set coffee water to boil and spuds to freshen. Then we jointed up our rods for an all-out assault on fresh meat. When we'd creeled four "keepers," we'd quit and start munching. It didn't take long. Billy put his Royal Coachman into the throat of a log jam's inlet, and an instant later I heard him bawling. Just above him, I walked out onto a tiny sand bar and shot across at a beautifully solemn slash of cut-bank water. Three floats and I wrestled as gallant a two-pounder as ever tackled a Heather Moth. We just barely made away with those two fish. A post-luncheon snooze and we packed up and climbed the wagon road until the ranch lodge valley came in sight. In brilliant sunlight, we paused for a comprehensive survey of the premises. Lodge, stables, barn, carriage shed—all deserted. But they were packed with farming equipment and rigs.

Billy whistled softly to himself. "There ain't a human bein', much less any critters, on the whole place. It's a ghost ranch. But I'll swear I saw lights, blue lights, in that house the other night."

"That was lightning you saw reflecting through the windows."

We rode along a spell, and Billy kept muttering to himself.

I'll always recall that stretch of trout water at the foot of which we finally camped as about the most beautiful tumble-

jumble of exciting fishing mileage I've ever seen; a pretty broad statement, considering. We left the cart tracks where they began to climb steeply, and wound around under increasingly brooding cliffs into a point of shelving meadow with aspens and a few spruce in its lap. It was a high, wildly lonesome spot, with the true canyon pinching in sharply up above and a view down-valley off to the north that was entrancing.

We hobbled old Blue, the pack horse, just in case, but turned Cub and Prince loose to ride herd on him. Billy spaded out the fire pit and laid the wire grill over a touch-off of pine knots. Then he laid by wood enough and to spare for a three-meal stay. I waded into a fern bed and accumulated a mattress of them for our bags, with a foot push-log for good measure. The tarpaulin was laid handy and our chuck box put at kitchen-alert. Chores finished, we reassembled our rods, slipped into creel harness, and set off upstream to explore.

The canyon's jaws pinched in abruptly half a mile above camp, and we heard heavy water slamming through what turned out to be long, sinuous, glassy pulls broken by shark-toothed granite dams. Through and over these, muslin cascades bounced and spread into paradise pools where quiet caught its breath again. We tramped like pygmies beneath towering cliffs and along pint-sized sand bars hashed with deer and elk tracks.

You, too, doubtless have walked the banks of virgin trout water unable to select a beginning stretch. Nowadays we wisely fish by well-devised solunar tables which foretell with amazing competence the annual day-by-day mess call for minnow and leviathan. Not all do, however, because the "early" and "late" schools of thought along such lines will remain forever and aye unreconstructed. But in those early days all we had to go by was the "feel" of the barometer, and lore passed on to us by old colored folks back home who had taught us when the "sign"

and the "moon" were right. Billy and I had an agreement to keep only extremely worth-while fish. The "sign" must have been right, for soon we were throwing back trout that would have popeyed the average tourist.

In those primal troutng years I packed the biggest creel made. It was braced with belts of green rawhide that shrunk it into a powerfully gripped basket. On its top was sewn a leather-and-felt fly and leader carrier. I never used a landing net but wore, instead, a thin cotton pallbearer's glove on my left hand. Wet, this would clamp and hold the slippery big 'uns like a vise. And with the flybook handy, I could stand in heaviest wading water and change, if need be, without having to do several other things at once. The capture of Billy's five-pounder that afternoon was an epic. It was coming half-dusk, and by pressing them down somewhat, I had kept four trout that more than filled my basket end-to-end. Just then I ran onto Billy, fixing to negotiate his fly into a magnificent pool. I can shut my eyes and live it all over again, like yesterday. And when the spell has lifted, I'll be as limp and tingly as I was then, too.

Emerging through some alders around a rocky pool-head, I spotted Billy clambering over a huge boulder at its foot and dropping onto a sandy spit. From the way he let his creel down, I knew it was fish-heavy. On either side of the stream fifty yards of alders, young conifers, and willow tangles matted back to cliffs sheer three hundred feet above us. Billy hadn't seen me, and I could tell from the way he carefully stripped off line and measured the breaking-belt twixt drop-water from the dam and its outrunning, greenish spirals that he was licking his chops and figuring heavy on making his first presentation count.

His fly landed precisely where I wished it to, and was whisked off down along the off-ledge suction. Billy's rod tip whipped upward and bent almost before a flash of sullen cream and

crimson went off like dynamite where I'd last seen that Royal Coachman. I suppressed a longing to yell my head off, but Billy had all he could attend to right now—and then some. Veteran and cool-head that he was, I saw Bill's mouth form a big O the first time that rainbow saluted. Then his lips set and he leaned back on the Leonard. His left hand fingered slack like a harpist, and he settled down to the struggle he realized lay ahead. He had aboard the kind of trout he liked to skin and mount against lacquered alder bark, and then bake and work on with some spuds and cornbread. He had beach room, but if that fish ever beat him over the dam—his horse would change colors. I yelled too late and Billy never saw the stick of driftwood he tripped over.

Hitting a belly-whopper in the wet sand, he lost slack and came up cussing a blue streak and grabbing for it. But by then the big rainbow was over the falls, with Billy stripping line frantically and dashing for the roaring water gap through which the fish had disappeared. I was within ten feet of Billy by then and realized instinctively what he intended doing. The quarry was still aboard, I could tell by the tight line. Deliberately seating himself on a roller of that glassy chute-the-chutes, Billy held his rod high above his head and disappeared in the thunderous smother below.

Rushing to a brink-way boulder, I held on against the current's draw and watched the grand finale; fully prepared to have to go in after Billy in case, as was more than probable, he had hit a sunken rock and been knocked cuckoo. But, to my relief, he shot out of five-foot water down the pool, got good footing, shook himself and waded shoreward, snatching in slack. That fish must have been deeply snagged, for it was in the shallows on the far side and still trying. Gradually Billy worried it into a beachy cove, slid it onto the hard-packed sand, laid

down his rod and let go an Indian war whoop. I joined up about then and we sat down for Billy to blow and admire that pretty fish. There was no creeling that fellow, so Billy cut a forked willow.

Walking home wet was nothing in our young lives. While Bill's duds dried around an extra bonfire, we dished up a highly satisfactory bait of vittles. Dishes done, Billy stuck two candles in a hip pocket and said, "Let's ride down and give that lodge an inspection. I believe the dump is sort of loco."

A nigh full moon climbing over the valley's east wall lit up the stone stairway to the lodge's main terrace. The place was deserted and boarded tight. In the rear an extension T obviously housed the service end. We pried open a window with Billy's belt axe and stepped into what proved a butler's pantry. Our candles led us into a dining room. His flare aloft, Billy stopped and whistled softly. A mahogany sideboard flashed with tarnished silver and heavy cut glass. Places for eight were laid at a table loaded with rare old china, costly napery, and massive flat silver. Drawers were loaded with damask and exquisite linens. But over everything lay deep dust film and rat droppings.

Much subdued, we eased into an enormous, round living room, cupolaed in dull glass. Passages to bedroom suites opened north and south. Magnificent Navajo rugs, powdery and rat-chewed, and streaming cobwebs set off the weird interior, like something from Edgar Allan Poe. Sporting prints adorned the log walls, and great elk and deer heads grinned down at us. Billy stumbled upon an enormous music box.

"Maybe the damned thing will play—it'll be more cheerful if it does."

A few turns of the crank and "The Blue Danube" set the rafters waltzing. Half-filled decanters of Scotch and bourbon, poker chips, and recklessly flung cards littered a table. Fine

hats for men and women hung upon antlered racks. A gun cabin held fine, rusted rifles, and in a drawer were several handsome revolvers. The four bedrooms revealed closets hung with men's and women's clothing. The bathrooms were exquisitely finished. On one dresser lay a gold-and-silver-mounted Colt six-gun with solid ivory Bisley grips.

"Brother Buckingham," whispered the awed Billy Mex, "I've a notion to urge that gun to let me and you see it safely home." The music box had played itself out during our brief cruise of the remaining rooms. Having refastened the burglarized window, we walked to the steps leading from lawn to valley floor.

"Jeeps, Buck," gulped Billy, squeezing my arm. "Look back—do you believe me—now?"

A dull, bluish glare was sifting through the boarded lodge window chinks. Billy's fingers crushed my biceps. The next thing I knew we were scrambling to our feet at the bottom of that stone stairway and racing streamward. Neither of us spoke until well past the bridge and at the horses.

"It's gone," gasped Billy, "but we seen it, didn't we?" I said we sure seen sump'n. But the lodge was now just a black blob against the cliffs. I puzzled over the business a long time before dropping off to sleep in my bag. Whatever *thing* that lodge held, I hoped it wouldn't get sore and follow up to pounce on us in our sleep. Just before he dropped off, Billy muttered, "Buck, I didn't know you could sprint that fast, you almos' kep' up with me."

There is something ineffably nostalgic in remembering one's awakenings in fishing camps amid the high Rockies. The last thing one has in mind, lying warm and comfortable in a sleeping bag, is the silvered serenity of moon and stars probing a deep well of black fastnesses, replete with the sounds of nature and wildlife. There is realization that within one's neighborhood

some silvertip lumbers or beds, elk and deer feed, and the tinier populations scurry and battle. You hear the sound of strong horse teeth chomping meadow grass, the light thud of shifting hooves, soft nickers of companionship. You see the dying pinpoint of camp fire, as you pull the heavy tarp closer in case a storm blows up.

A pine squirrel's chirruping gradually alarm-clocks you from the void of deepest rest. You lie in utter peace while rearranging a sense of earthliness. Stars are fading into false dawn, nature's night shift is going off watch. The tarpaulin is frost-covered, and so is your bag. A gradually graying meadow lies beneath a pall of dull mist. Comes the soft whirl of a daring camp bird's wings. You resolve to be afoot, just as the stream's musical score steals through a still sleep-ridden tolerance. Its tinkle becomes a fortissimo summons, so you sit up, reach for your boots, towel, and toothbrush. The water will be icy but comforting, and as you pass, a foot prod to the other sleeping bag fetches a grunt of agreement to rise and shine as to breakfast fire. Smoking coffee, bacon grease, rainbow steaks, and flapjacks.—Take back your king's ransom; we are free men.

Matutinal dishes sanded and soaped, there was a period of silence while tackle was adjusted and hobnailed wading boots laced.

"How many flies you takin', Bill?"

"I never pack but six. When I played baseball, all they ever gimme was three strikes. So I'm overliberal with trout when they come up to the home plate. If they don't or won't hit them six varieties, they're out with me. But I jes' keep fishin' an' hopin' t' outwit their mess call. Fish have their feedin' periods, jes' like us—if we can ever outfigure 'em." I watched him pin Heather Moth, Black Gnat, Royal Coachman, Queen-of-the-

Waters, Gray Hackle, and California Coachman into his own creel-top flybook.

"Fishin' upstream or down, Billy?"

"Makes no never-mind t' me, Buck. This valley runs north and south, so th' mawnin' sun bein' over your shoulder is jes' a matter of th' crick bends anyway. Besides, each pool's an individual nut to crack. Le's meet back here by eleven, eat a snack, an' hit f' home. An'—le's jes' keep th' real big uns."

Writing this, I wonder what the stretch of water I fished that glorious forenoon nearly forty years ago looks like today. Pretty much the same, perhaps, and I hope to the Red Gods there are fish in it today as heavy and as game, and worthy of their honorable ancestors which rose and gulped my Heather Moth. For I lost one of the three priceless such lures I had along.

Chances are, that valley is full of tourists nowadays, with the crick well game-wardened and restocked regularly—which is as it should be. There'll be flamboyantly arrayed dudes riding and pack-training all over the hills and peaks, and, God of our Fathers, sheep all over the once restful horizon where our critters roamed untainted. But the sun and moon and stars will be the same, the heights still as overlording, some game left, and the air as clear and clean and sweet off the spruce and chokecherries as I ever knew it.

I'll bet the coyotes still sit on their measly thigh sprockets and rifle tilted-nose anthems against a blue moon, and I'll wager that big spring still gushes from beneath those awe-inspiring cliffs. And what's more, I hope that all the dudes who ride that range and those who come after them have as much fun thereabouts as Bill and I had.

I lost my Heather Moth less than half an hour after I waded a broad, pelting riffle half a mile below camp and cast mouse hackles with silver body trim into a deep, green pool cupped in

behind an almost clean-across log jam. I watched the current's swing race the sinking pinpoint toward me, and held slack at hair-trigger. Half instinct, half surface boil made me strike heavily. And only those who know the sensation of hanging one's fly into a submarine know the "no-give" that challenges wrist and biceps and warns of trouble ahead.

Something whispered I was on the trail of a big trout; but if this fellow got below me into heavy twistlers and rapids, I was a blowed-up sucker. Once he was almost under the log jam, but I put the pressure on and turned him up the still water. At its end was a pebbly beach that I welcomed with open arms. I slid the fish into its shallows, and he was a sight for sore eyes. But just as his nose struck some protruding stones and I tightened the leader gently, I saw the fly leave the cat-gut snell. All I held was the leader. Apparently sensing reprieve, the great trout flipped his tail and half-rolled. I lost my head and tried to kick him ashore. But I kicked myself off balance, fell flat, and the last glimpse I caught of Mr. Rainbow was a fleeting flash of white and red disappearing into rapid green depths. And my Heather Moth went with him as the drag pumped dominant life through his gills.

The shame and frustration of that moment still lingers dull red, facially. But from some source I gathered strength to continue, with a brand new Heather Moth and leader to bolster a cheap alibi and a prayer to high heaven to sustain a sense of humor. I must have hooked and released forty worth-while fish that morning. But when I sopped into camp there were only six end-to-enders in my rawhided basket, and Billy, vociferous of his luck, had kept eight. Meanwhile, we had accumulated some company.

I recognized Sheriff Sam Himes' red, four-seated buckboard, with its span of rangy roans feeding near by. Mort Davis, one

of Sam's ranch foremen, was along and they were exclaiming over Billy's big trout.

"I stayed at you fellows' ranch last night," said Sam. "Hughie told us where you'd be, so as we were comin' here anyhow, it fitted in."

"Whut you doin' up here, Sam?"

"Well, I'm gonna have t' sell this outfit nex' month, an' as I ain't been here but once in five years, thought I'd better drive up an' check inventory; th' last watchman I had up here run off four years ago. Said th' place is haunted." Billy Mex, cutting up some rainbow chunks, rolled a wise eye at me and winked. The Sheriff and Mort were busy helping with Dutch-oven biscuits and hashed spuds with onion, for dinner.

"Haunted?" chuckled Billy. "Whut giv'm that idea, Sheriff?"

"Well, 'bout eight years ago I fixed up a deer and bear hunt through here for a wealthy dude and his new young wife, from th' East. Met 'em over at the Springs. They hunted again next year and the boy bought three sections in here, filed on some more land, and put in a big outfit. That lodge cost him a slug of dough. Brought out a lot of expensive and wild city folks every summer; they were really high rollers. Reports of wild parties drifted down to town. Then came some kind of accidental, but fatal, shootin'. The young wife was th' victim. They pulled out the minute the coroner's verdict came in; and no one ever came back. My dude closed the ranch, sold his cattle, put the property in my charge with instructions to just leave it lay. All taxes and upkeep charges have been coming through regularly from some trust company. The dude died recently, and I got orders to sell at auction. The old fellow I had living in the bunkhouse run off."

"Whut did he claim ghosted 'im?" asked Billy. The Sheriff stepped over and peered into Billy's deep skillet of sizzling fish

cuts. Said he liked his rare. Then he added: "Aw, old Gilley imagined he saw blue lights come and go in th' lodge at night, and heard womenfolks screamin'." Billy's mouth sort of flew open.

"You boys want t' buy th' layout an' open a tourist joint?"

"Might be an idea, at that," said Billy. "An' that ghost dope would make grand publicity. But I'd hate to turn a lot o' dudes loose onto such fishin' water as this." The chuck was all dished, so we set up.

"How about you and Billy helping me and Mort take stock? We can finish by tomorrow noon and I'll give you both time off to fish late and early; in fact, me and Mort will join you."

"We'd have to charge you a pretty stiff fee, Sheriff."

"How much?"

"Oh, we'll take all the firearms, fishing tackle, and leather goods—if any—that ain't rusted and ruined."

"Gosh, you're easy pleased!—You're on." Billy sighed.

Sitting around that evening munching crispy sow-belly and more rainbow cutlets, the Sheriff said:

"Boys, that was an adventure, wasn't it, but I still don't believe what I saw." Billy said, "I still don't believe this fishin'." He grinned and went on cleaning that gold-mounted Colt with the ivory Bisley grips.

"Sheriff," he said, very seriously, "we forgot t' tell you, but me an' Buck seen them blue lights in th' lodge, night befo' las'. But we didn't hear no wimmenfolks screamin'. We was jes' fixin' t' look th' place over when she lit up."

The Sheriff's mouth, full of grub, sort of spilled, but he chewed on through. "What did you-all do when you saw them blue lights?"

"We run."



BIRD DOG "BLINKERS"!

IN addition to his several definitions of "blink" or "blinker," Webster certifies it "to shut one's eyes to; to avoid or purposely evade." It is easy to see, therefore, how readily such a human trait has been clapped on to the complex in a bird dog whose game contacts result in such behavior. Ever since field trials began, or even earlier, when gunners began developing pointers and setters, a dog's evading bird scent has puzzled hunters. Blinking's cause and possible cure, as a question, has probably crossed the desks of outdoor magazine "dog editors" as much as, if not more than, any one topic. Certainly as a charge of misconduct afield it has caused argument, debate, near fist-fights, challenges, and undoubtedly has wrecked high aspirations in important stakes and championships.

The writer has in mind two charges of blinking which have made history in the National Field Trial Champion Association's history. The first occurred in that sensational duel between Eugene's Ghost and Becky Broomhill (1922). In that three-hour heat the Ghost far exceeded the great bitch's bird-finding,

stacking up on approximately sixteen bexies and ten single points over which his handler, Mr. J. M. Avent, shot eight perfectly retrieved birds. But the decision went to Becky because, on one find, allegedly, the Ghost blinked. It must have been mere "gallery gossip" because Mike (the Ghost's kennel name) had never been accused of the weak point. Directly prior to the National, Bob Stoner, his conditioner, had hunted Mike hard to tone down his tremendous casts, smooth his handling, and perfect both his manners and his retrieving. All of which, in the long run, shows how mistakenly a really great dog can be wrongfully gossiped about when, as a matter of fact, blinking did not enter into the final consideration of judgment.

It had been raining. Point was called for the Ghost. He stood just off a sketchy plum thicket with a barbed-wire fence between him and his handler. A gallery of fully a hundred and fifty excited riders galloped to the scene. Two overly eager young girls (we recall one of them by name) reined up their ponies right in behind Jim Avent's arrival. In her excitement one of the lassies struck her slicker with her quirt and it cracked like a gun shot. The Ghost, quivering with tensity, moved perhaps three feet and re-established gorgeously while Avent was actually crawling between the wires. Thereafter, all was in order. When the decision came down, controversy resulted, and the Ghost has lingered under that blinking charge for years. As a matter of fact, the late Hobart Ames has reportedly stated that blinking had nothing to do with the result; the judiciary didn't even consider it that. Reportedly, Becky won because of superior handling and Mike was charged with "too many scouts in the outer woods." All of which is now history save for injection of the thought that said scouts must have accomplished a smooth job when a dog found sixteen bexies, ten singles, and has eight birds killed over him in three hours. This is related,



Field trial Champion Eugene's Ghost winner-in-action at U.S. Open 1922. One of setterdom's all-time

however, just to show how unjust was the charge of blinking in Mike's case. The judges concurred, so that's history.

Another famous blink, or charge thereof, occurred in the National of 1941, when the great Sage pointer, Ariel, was named champion. The splendid Walter Teagle bitch, Norias Aeroflow, ran a corking three-hour heat. At about the two-hour mark of her three-hour session, the writer, an associate judge, laid back to check what proved a magnificent and flawlessly handled find of hers. It took a hard ride for her famous handler, Chesley Harris, to bring her up front. When we caught up, the bitch swung to the left when unheeled, and dashed through some woody creek bottom, with Ches hard after her and yelling like a Comanche. I cast to the right, galloped around a huge gallery packing the muddy road, and rejoined Dr. T. Benton King and Mr. Hobart Ames (the two other judges) where the cavalcade had stopped to observe proceedings in a weeded cove to the left. The bitch's bracemate, a setter dog with a somewhat crippled paw, was also in the cove.

As I pulled up my horse, I saw Aeroflow coming across the field toward me. Suddenly she flashed into a point. A single, to the right, flushed and crossed almost over her head. A moment later Harris arrived and another flawlessly handled bevy took wing. Nothing remotely resembling a blink had occurred under my personal scrutiny. But I had arrived from covering the long lay back too late to see what had allegedly happened before I sighted Aeroflow coming across the cove. Next day I heard whispered charges of a blink there, and investigated. According to reports, the bitch beat Harris to the cove, emerged, and pointed. About then the setter came along, fussed around her, and complicated matters. The bitch looked up, couldn't see her handler, realized that things were taking place for which she might catch the blame—and moved. The first bevy, one I never

saw, moved. But the hard-luck part of the story is that it was moved accidentally, or rather because of the sheer curiosity of a nosy young "galleryite," who, far over in the weed field at the far end of the encircling gallery, rode well out into the open beyond where the setter was fumbling while Jane (Norias Aeroflow) was pointing. Conditions around her then became chaotic and she took out across the field and pointed the second bevy flawlessly. Had the curious spectator not raised those other birds that were seen by a few only—well there might have been another story.

When I sighted her, she was coming across the field—and handled a new bunch perfectly. At any rate, sustained or not (and I have talked to many pros and cons on the matter) Norias Aeroflow grazed a national championship distressingly. As with the Ghost, I doubt sincerely if ever, before or since, either animal was accused of blinking. All of which comes under the head of tough luck and that's that. Now as to the real disease.

Another form of dog work erroneously described and sometimes decried as "blinking" sees a staunchly pointing animal suddenly break its stand, whip wide either way around its original stance, and re-establish. In some game areas hunters actually sometimes break their dogs to such tactics. And again, it sometimes results from a combination of the hunters realizing that the dog knows more about handling game to the gun than the gun knows. So the gun lets the dog whip the quarry into firing position.

I well remember a friend's buying a sturdy pointer and his dismay when the fellow, after finding well and holding perfectly, suddenly whipped into an encircling dash and then came down on his birds from the opposite direction. I borrowed old Dick one day and was forewarned. So I watched for his first find with heightened expectation. It happened in a tiny weed

cove alongside thickish woods. Dick ramrodded his bevy, turned his head to watch my approach, and, when he figured I was close enough to shoot if anything went wrong, he broke, disappeared in the weeds to the right, and an instant later I spotted him across from me in the edge of the open woods. He then catwalked several paces and froze. The birds flushed from the only spot they could—to my left—and afforded a perfect try. If a bird-cornering dog like Dick is a blinker, I am the Duke of Wellington.

Getting on the subject with one of my good friends among the professional handlers, John Gardner, of Red Banks, Mississippi, while bird shooting at Neely Grant's preserve near there, I said that in my opinion the complex of blinking birds is mightily misunderstood and has three variations. First, the dog who finds well or indifferently and then deliberately evades contact; second, the dog who finds and leaves birds you've never even seen or suspected him of scenting and abandoning; or, third, the mistaken blinker who has actually been trained to find, point, and then circle to head off the quarry. I could not conceive of such behavior's being remotely classed as blinking—but you hear of it. John Gardner could not subscribe to all my theories, and his comment was so interesting that I set it down, in letter form. But we agreed solemnly that blinking is definitely man-made. Writes John:

Any bird dog that blinks is made that way by some act of man, and, to my idea and with due respect to yours or any other man's I know, there is just one form of the bad habit. And, as a handler, I dislike it heartily, though realizing its basis. A true blinker evades and leaves his game. The animal that slinks away and comes behind you is just not wanting to be shot over. There are three common causes of blinking. First, the dog has been made gun-shy. Second, the animal has been punished too severely for this and its off-shoot of instinctive fear of what'll happen when it points. This

happens, of course, *before* the dog has hardly begun to develop natural pointing instinct. Third, the dog has been whistle-driven too hard too early and *not* allowed to unravel foot-scents. They learn that they are supposed to hustle on if they do not get game scent *strong*.

You take a gun-shy dog and he will at first drop or sneak back to you. If you persist, he begins connecting the gun and game and will not go to his game because of the fear complex. And let me say, right there, that ninety-nine out of every hundred bird dogs that are gun-shy are that way because their ears are in bad shape from either sheer neglect or lack of knowledge on their owners' parts. Tonsils, adenoids, sinuses, and mastoids in children furnish a lead there.

Now as to being too hard on a dog before he develops natural pointing instinct. Unless he is allowed to develop naturally on plentiful game, no man can make a dog point as though he is proud of the job. Oh, you can make him stop and indicate that game is in the neighborhood; but I don't call that pointing. You can let a puppy get to flash-pointing and then begin to bear down not too hard and he will become a bird dog and love it. But they have to get the feel of their bodies going rigid at the scent of wild birds—not this half-tame stuff, by the way.

I believe a dog loves to point; he gets the same thrill out of it you and I do when we find them that way. They're proud of it and want to express themselves. He is primarily a hunting companion, and postures as to high heads or tails are developments of strains, bloods, and, of course, handler-efforts in development, like deportment, or dancing school manners in the upper brackets. If owners, trainers, and the public would use their bird dogs as companions and hunt them more, instead of expecting them to perform as machines, the game would progress faster and more satisfactorily and with less bad traits like blinking.

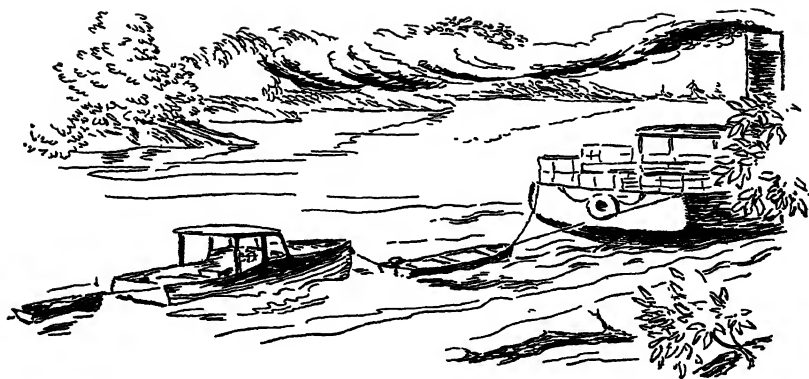
Get too hard with a young dog at first and he will back away and come to you. He will soon learn that in thus ducking game he will get hell knocked out of him. What happens then? You just about have a worthless dog on your hands. So the idea is, or should be, to treat a young bird dog considerately. Some can stand just so

much, like some children. Some have better noses, just as some youngsters are more precocious. Professional handlers come to sense these things just as physicians or youth-movement technicians come to analyze youngster traits. The handler-owner relationships often assume like proportions of understanding or disagreement.

Let's say a field trial handler starts a pup the owner hopes to see develop into a winner. The handler is keen for results; perhaps too much so. The pup gets to nosing the ground and the handler hits him with the whistle to drive him on. Then birds are ridden up. The handler keeps driving, and the first thing he knows, the prospect drops his head in front of a gallery and he whistle-hits him again. The gallery rides up birds and the handler then has a public blinker, sure enough. My personal trouble is a dislike to make a dog go over the hill when there is cover closer for him to hunt. But I had rather a dog would make a mistake that shows me up as not having done enough, than one that shows I've done too much. But that is a paramount hazard in winning field trials. The "easy way" is to go on, rather than back up. When the real dog hits, he hits in a big way—and you are proud of him. What I've said here is in the first person and from actual experience. The blinker is, I repeat, essentially man-made—and you know it, too. I am proud to say that more of my dogs go with the birds than leave them.

JOHN GARDNER

We would surmise therefore that the bird dog blinker is the child who gets punished without explanation for something it doesn't quite "get"—but could and would with more understanding, tolerance, and patience. Try it, on your dog.



LIKE OLD TIMES

WITHIN fifty feet of our goose hunter's tent camp the brink of a lofty towhead gauged in autumnal forestings drops precipitously to the Mississippi's seething current. From such eminence, with sun glinting down through tawny, blue-bronze flow, eye-focus is all but hypnotized by whorls of churning silt dissolved in its own murk.

Whether one's ears catch or hold the undertones of this belching giantess, one is vaguely conscious of and perhaps a bit terrified by the vast torrent's baffling power, moods for brewing and spewing disaster, despite her disarming purr during stages of beneficence. Too, there is something akin to fascinated awe in realization that inevitably the river will climb high above one's tentpole to slop and batter at fortress-like levees east and west.

Even a goose hunter is entitled to ponder what "Meche Sepe" looked like when, as, and how she wandered from the cretaceous era through its successors. Such figures as two hundred trillion years of Earth's duration, three hundred million since life began thereon, and three million for man's occupancy, challenge rea-

son. Time probably was, however, when, with the glacial ice cap's thawing, the river's discharge knifed deeper and deeper through northerly limestone overburdens; sweeping ahead layers of alluvium to pile up far down-valley toward abysmal yonders. Sub-eon spaces when the Great Lakes drained equatorward; until the drying up of Lake Agassiz (a huge midwestern sea long lost amid the voids of time) reversed nature and doused the lakes into north seas via the St. Lawrence of today.

Another age or so (for what is time to a goose hunter?) and the mighty current's chiseling has sunk it more deeply between rocky outcroppings. Say the geologists, falls a furlong high were worn down to mere rapids. Tumbled loams and clays have been eddy-sifted and piled into jelly-jumbled fingers tooting the mouth of an unnamed deluge spitting into a yet undiscovered ocean.

Tribal wanderers of gradually contacting nomadic races, and fusions of Eskimos, Asiatics, Norse, and Toltecs have groped their ways from ages untold up through savagery and barbarism to primal fringes of civilization and even Christianity, leaving along the Mississippi and its effluents the greatest theater of surmise, argument, exploration, and hunting ever offered by destiny to global adventurers, geologists, archaeologists, and historians.

Sitting about camp, with the labors of its pitching and pit-digging behind us and fumes off a savory stew supper ahead, our meandering goose hunter's mind rechecks the billions upon billions of waterfowl that must needs have honked and quacked from source to mouth of this dread watercourse. Were they hatches from rematings of Noah's Ark when original populations were flood-swept from earth by Jehovah's anger? Was there really ever such a flood? What have been wildlife's cycles since slush ice became morass and tundra fit only for reproduction of

web-footed myriads?—obscuring skies and dinning cloudlands with clangor in response to solunar timetables and the still unexplained migrational urge!

Baffled, we recoil mentally and contemplate changes of the past fifty-two years in our immediate locale. Oldest maps and pilots of today still designate our camp site as at the head of Idlewild bar. My binoculars reveal down-river Rabbit Island of the same name as when we first shot on it in 1892. For me, this tenthouse of '44-'45 is homecoming to the river. Hurley and "Little" Hurley and I will gun hereabouts and well below, too, with Jack Seabrook and Paul Banks. Those two last-named lads were not of this world when my houseboat lay beneath Jack's uncle's Indian Mound at the foot of Ship Island bar.

Tomorrow, luck holding, we can bag only two geese each, doff our caps to Uncle Sam as law-abiders, and count ourselves lucky, at that. Two decades ago that same limit was begun at eight. Before then, the sky was the "limit" and the market gunner in his glory. His place in that sun has passed to the commercialist; an ill wind that blows no one any good. But nowadays we can still call it hunting and try to do men's work in the processes. Peering through my glasses, memories of my first boyish goose hunt on Rabbit Island fifty-three years ago is crystal clear. It comes in flash-backs.

Father and I (a twelve-year-old hopeful) climbing the gang-plank of a brilliantly lighted Mississippi River steamboat. Assiduous negro porters—the great stern-wheeler's fairyland of lights—mingled scents of delicious viands and tippie—the vast, claret-carpeted salon—shouted orders. A double file of shuffling, singing darky roustabouts bearing prodigious burdens—vehicles, casks of mellow liquors, blooded stock, freight galore packed from water line to Texas and Hurricane; I was witnessing an

era of waterway's commerce at its proudest, but I was gone goose hunting.

A wonderful supper and dancing! Brain fingers now picking at memory's strings to fetch back the lilt of those polkas. Beautiful ladies in half-bustles tripping in with choker-collared partners in tightish pantaloons and pomaded hair-dos! Knots of booted planters in ten-gallon Stetsons and heavy watch fobs—and no doubt heavily armed otherwise! The pilothouse! Searchlights probing darkly wooded banks—mellow whistle warnings to passing craft—the packet's grunts driving up-current—Dad and I swung steeply ashore.

Mule-drawn surreys and an ante-bellum home—hot chocolate and mush-muffins—four-poster beds. That home and plantation have been in the river these forty-odd years. The raw, yet unknown of Ole Miss in next morning's predawn. My burly negro guide bearing profile goose decoys—the pit already dug and a cracker box thoughtfully provided for me to use as firing step. "Us let 'em light 'mongst d' d'coys," explained Ben, "den us shoots into 'em, an' agin whin dey heists up'ards."

Dawn and a silvering world—pinkish prongs suffusing the east at our backs. A thinly penciled line winging from the north—"Hide down, son, hide down an' stay put." Distant honkings growing in volume and as suddenly stilled—"Cock yo' gun, son, dey's fixin' t' hover." Smothered wing banter and guttural cacklings! "Rise up an' let 'em have hit, boy, deys jes' ti' d' lef—pout hit to 'em!"

A hedgerow of white-spatted black necks craned high—beady black eyes staring at us in mute, widening terror—first one and then the other trigger pulled—muzzle flare from recoiling heavy loads—black shapes tumbling awry—discordant outcries—my darky's leaping onto the sand bar with me swarming after him. Confused survivors obliquing down-wind toward Dad

and Mr. Mangum's pit—more and more geese that came both our ways—excitement piled upon jubilee. Lunch amid birchlike cottonwoods—two days of such bliss, and an all-night voyage home aboard the *Jim Lee*. With such memories blurring the binoculars, let's skip here and there through my gunning diary of '44-'45 at the goose camp.

"Hurley and I and his boy, Hurley, Junior ('Shorty' to us because he's hunted with us since childhood), looked over the Idlewild bar country opposite Commerce landing. We had the counsel and help of Mr. Petty, the fisherman at Commerce, who helped 'Doc' and 'Shorty' build their big gas boat. It's a staunch, roomy 26-footer, seaworthy and sturdily engined. Automobile cabin drive, and a hold and broad deck aft for decoys and plunder. Looked over the high points and that low swale at foot of Idlewild yesterday. The river is very low and two small island bars are showing in Rabbit Island Bend. Across from and above Idlewild is huge Pope bar with a long tongue of mud flat showing off its lower point. Swarms of ducks in its shallows.

"Pitched camp on high head of Idlewild; full view of the lake inland. Half mile below camp a mud flat makes in to some soft-bar and up to some spring-fed benches grown up in nut grass. The soft-bar is literally pockmarked with goose tracks. The birds had obviously landed on the flats and fed up-bar into the feeding wallows. Dug four pits cornering a death trap, with the decoys to be strung out from the mud flat to profiles on higher ground.

"Loaded the tent, lumber, cots, bedding, stove, kitchenware, grub, and household duffle up the bar head. A job that stripped us to our waists and induced what is politely known as profuse perspiration. But order came out of chaos. Shorty took over as camouflage artist. The new tent stove was jointed and its bottom

sanded. A fire therein soon revealed its efficiency. We'll cook over three charcoal buckets. Stew a complete success; three different soups with an extra stir-in of chopped franks. Only spoons necessary, thus cutting down on the dishwashing detail. Breakfast will be muchly scrambled eggs, toasted biscuits, and java. The tent displaces five cots handily. Stove feels tops nights. Several big tows and two war transports off the point after night. Tomorrow will be the pay-off. Night-o."

"The geese came in, and—as Mr. Petty said—'We seen 'em before they seen us.' Hurley woke us up on 'fast time' (as the darkies call it) and there was no grumbling at roll-out. Stars snapped and raw darkness nipped. Breakfast was sketchy, but the coffee—strong. Hurley loaded the mounted goose decoys, floating stool and profiles into the big paddle boat and outboarded down to a point nearest the mud inlet. He launched the floaters, we positioned the stuffed lures, and while Hurley ran the paddle boat and joined up, we strung in the profiles to the pits ambush. Final decision was that incomers (depending on the wind) would be allowed to circle and pitch so that when the firing started, all hands might get a crack. Definitely—*no* low shooting. Birds against the skyline or no count.

"Confidently expected first arrivals from direction of Pope bar. Ten minutes after shooting time, a warning whistle sounded from Hurley's pit, but we had all spotted the flock winging in low off the river and over the floaters. They circled us twice. Shorty confessed later that he doubted each fellow's ability to stand the pressure. Half the flight was sanded before I saw a big bird fold and tumble from an upper tier. The battle was on. Firing became general as the fugitives climbed. I cut down an easy pair with my Magnum and copper-coated fours. When the curtain rang down, six birds were flattened and Shorty

retrieved a seventh from the mucky nut grass. Leaving Shorty to produce the eighth goose, Hurley and I and Mr. Petty hiked to camp to dress and ice the near bag-limit.

"Coffee and a snooze were interrupted by two reports from Shorty's pit. Soon thereafter he appeared with the missing bird and was denied sustenance until same was in the cooler. Pretty good sport at mallards along the lake that afternoon. Strange to relate, little interference from bar walkers all day. For the benefit of those tuning in late, a bar walker is a lost soul, who, not knowing how to hunt anything, much less wild geese, won't stay in his pit. So he tramps the bars and frightens off game for all hands. Pit occupants curse him roundly and pray that no stone will ever mark his last resting place. A grand day, and may tomorrow prove its equal. Night-o."

"If any two guys ever did, Hurley, Sr., and I 'got ours' this day. Drove to Commerce after dark yesterday and found our way aboard by flashlight. It's three hundred feet down that winding path from the concrete revetment above the lagoon's floating dock. Hurley felt his way out into the narrow channel by spotlight and had to head a mile south before turning into the main stem. A life preserver may have been cold comfort but it felt good. For if I went, I wanted the big gun to go along with some chance of salvage. Feeling through fog on Ole Miss at night is a hazardous business for any craft or river stage. But Hurley is a safe and sane pilot, knowing full well that when accidents do happen on the Mississippi, they usually occur so suddenly and fast that it's every man for himself. We passed two buoys, spotted the buff bank above camp, and that barrel marking the snag to which we tie was really Home Sweet Home.

"From midnight on, it poured, but quit as we walked to the pits and rigged out some profiles. Then it turned to so hard it

blotted out the river. Stood it until nine-thirty and then beat it for camp, dried out, and loafed until noon. By one-thirty it slowed, so we battened camp and decided that if it stormed too hard we'd make the gas boat and call it a day. Just as we reached the holes, it deluged. It was a case of up-decoys and retreat. Under a shell box in my pit I had half a box of precious shells, Hurley's flashlight, and a *Reader's Digest*. (No charge for that plug.) I started to reach in and lift them, but deferred to break down the profiles. Finishing, I rushed to the pit and found the shell box floating. Everything 'lost and gone forever, Clementine.' A major disaster. Didn't seem possible, but it happened that quick.

"We were just backing off when a bawl from someone running to join us disclosed a dripping Mr. Petty. Billy Mills, the government light-keeper, had set him across way below and he hunted up-bar. Saw one bunch of geese but barely caught his ride home. It was a heartbreaking pull up that greasy high-climb of the Commerce landing escarpment, but we made it by the hardest. That's the type of beating goose hunters must take—and like it. This K.O. makes us all-square with *Branta Canadensis*, with several more holes to play. Night-o."

"Hurley and two associates emerge from another losing brush with Ole Miss. Unable to get the big boat's motor started one bitter morning, they outboarded the staunch paddle boat and Mr. Petty's skiff, full of decoys, down the Mississippi side and pitted on Rabbit Island all day. The river was up considerably and tough current running. Were late starting home, with the outboard and tow making heavy going. The two buddies asked to be set ashore to walk the four miles to Commerce and lighten the drag. Hurley complied, but when he tried to restart the

outboard, it muled up. Night fell. He dragged a few pops, ran a few hundred yards, and was out of gas.

"Managed somehow to make the bluff bank, tied up the boats, and almost tore himself to pieces clawing up through jagged drift and briars. An hour later he made a lumber camp and was prevailed upon to spend the night and not attempt the long hike to Commerce. Meanwhile, his companions made the landing late, waited until past midnight, became alarmed at the nonarrival of the outboard, and roused the countryside. By next morning the search was in full cry. Hurley, meanwhile, took some gas over to the boats, and found them both gone; pulled loose, probably, by low water, or stolen. Meanwhile, some thoughtful soul had phoned his wife that 'Doc' was missing in action. But it all ended happily, much more when a steamer down the river sighted and rescued the boats, outboard motor, and a fine Winchester heavy duck gun."

"Yesterday, according to light-keeper Billy Mills, he looked across the river at our tent camp and noticed that the high point on which it was located was 'sluffing off' fast. No time was to be lost; the whole point might go any minute. He hopped into his big tender, and by the time he had landed, dragged down the tent, and loaded the outfit with Mr. Petty's help, the cave-in was within ten feet of the tent door with probably a hundred feet of water beneath. A committee of grateful goose hunters will wait on Bro. Mills with appropriate felicitations for his thoughtful and sporting co-operation. We are now wondering what the upper end of Idlewild will look like by next fall."

"Today and yesterday have been outdoor gems. Young Jack Seabrook, worthy nephew of my old friend, the late Sterling

Withers, telephoned Hurley and me to come down and try conclusions with his cornfield geese. Ducks using Jack's cypress brake off old Beaver Dam lake needed attention, too. Jack's holdings amount to some five thousand acres of plantation fields and forest. Arrived at Jack's lovely home, standing on the site of the old Withers home that burned, about three o'clock. Who should be on hand to welcome us, in addition to host Jack and his friend Paul Banks, but my own old friend—'Colonel.'

"Colonel, his grizzled, wooly pate unbowed and his grin as expansive as ever, is the same who used to assist Horace in waiting on Major Ensley and me thirty years ago at the Indian Mound camp. The years have been kind to him and he has picked up considerable polish by virtue of long association with Jack's household in the capacities of valet, chauffeur, and yard boy extraordinary. With Colonel's help, Hurley and I were soon in shooting togs, rubber-booted, and escorted to the waiting pick-up truck.

"Familiar landmarks dotted landscape along the towering levee's banquette. Mr. Roach's crumbling warehouse with its face lifted; the Withers pond and the Sally Hole where once we struggled with giant bass and 'blue cats' on fly rods. Over the levee we plunged into country as tough as in my heyday. Black-blue gumbo sucked, the chains gripped, our engine screamed, and the odor of alcohol perfumed clean ozone. At the Bennett woods I was back 'on location.' Jack decided discretion the better part of valor, hid the truck in a patch of woods, and we hit the gumbo trail afoot.

"Colonel toted two dozen sacked paper profiles to augment Jack's set hidden near the pits; the rest of us strung out to bear our own burdens. We were to shoot in the narrow end of a V of corn along the woods. To our left was fifty acres of just-sprouting grain. It was tough walking, but goose hunters of the

Mississippi stripe know how to kick off accumulations about every fourth step. The burden of one's sins rolls away, too.

"Hurley was assigned a pit two hundred yards above mine, and while Colonel lay flat on his tummy and dipped water from the hole with his canvas decoy sack, Hurley stuck up his shadows. I fashioned my own layout while Paul and Jack kept on and hid in the near-by woods. Afternoon waned. No geese! A few minutes before quitting time a bitterly discouraged Jack and Paul approached my hide. I clawed to the surface and we stood commiserating the goose-egging we'd taken.

"Jack just happened to glance up-field, and there came a long overdue gang of gabblers. We fell flat amid the stalks and never batted an eye until they lowered beneath our cap brims. Three fell to our volley, but one got air-borne and sailed raggedly across the timber—badly body-shot. We were picking up jubilantly when another silent bunch winged down-field, and that time Hurley took toll before bouncing them over us. The sun's timetable was ended. But Jack wasn't satisfied. He announced postponement of next morning's planned duck shoot until afternoon. In the morning you'll really see some geese, he promised.

"Before dawn, changing routes to skip the gumbo, we drove down the levee, threaded jungled timber by starlight, rubbed frost from glittery decoys, and readied the pits to hurl 'ack-ack' and flak. Nor was it long in coming. Before sunup a flotilla of eighteen honkers rounded the woods corner and crossed my set dead overhead. I downed the leader and a flare-off that finished my day's legal quota in a hurry. Yelling for Jack and Paul, who came sprinting, I beat it for the cane-bordered forest. During the next hour not less than three hundred geese circled our decoys, and every bunch somehow floated not twenty yards high—over shootless me. But Hurley and the lads did their parts,

and by eight-thirty we headed homeward well laden. Mrs. Seabrook had arrived and taken charge of bachelor quarters. These days women work when, where, and as their war labors catch them. A luncheon of exceeding goodness disappeared practically to the last morsel. Midafternoon, with Colonel along as a pusher, we deployed in the cypress brake for ducks. There is a high-gun jackpot on the barrelhead. Jack and I eventually joined up in some knee-deep marsh for the last half hour's red-hot sport. From the river's western cut-off and Beaver Dam lake on the east, increasing showers of mallard, gadwall, widgeon, teal, spoonbill, and pintail swooped above the gaunt timber. Having retrieved our scattered bag, Colonel pushed to the landing. Burdened to our ankles, we mushed gumbo to the pick-up. Hurley and Paul, equally blown and burthened, slogged to us through growing dusk.

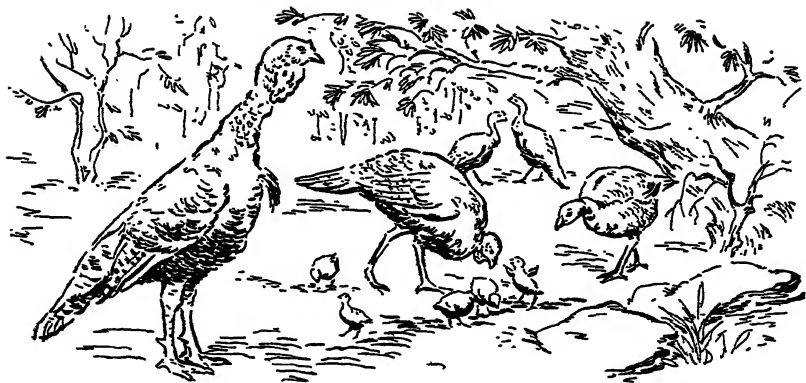
"Westward, glowing, brilliant ochre, beneath which masked sunset had taken many-hued curtain calls, dulled swiftly orange, and as speedily faded into bluish, damasked night. Lights sprang up in sequestered tenant cabins. Rims of mastlike forest, encircling cotton fields, dimmed into obscurity. 'And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.' Suddenly, like footlight welcoming an overture, star-gleam lit the heavens.

"Against such back-drops, countless thousands of waterfowl, clucking sibilant shapes, milled overhead to settle with faint splashings in the brake. A scene, I told myself, as ageless as before God's wrath. For hither and yon, fowl have bedded since where we stood was morass, pothole or sand bar; oncoming birth-soil for virgin forests, risen, flourished and fallen through centuries. Here game birds and mammals of an untrod-den empire once lorded inscrutable wilderness.

"A full day and great privilege; thanks to young hosts, who, sound sportsmen-conservationists that they are, will continue to

'preserve, protect, and defend' the rights, bounties, and beauties of wildlife still, as a rich and God-given heritage so abundantly theirs. With a grunting heave-ho Colonel slung his heavying sack of ducks into the pick-up's hold. Thanks to shells loaned by Jack, I had hit the jackpot—which meant fifty-fifty with Colonel. For that worthy, too, came spiritous residue befitting this and other gone-but-not-forgotten hunts together in older days and nights along Ole Miss. Toasting us heartily, and grinning through enfeebled headlight, Colonel's breath was frost cloud against a rime of moon. 'Like ol' times, ain't it, Mist' Nash?'"





WILD OR TAME GAME BIRDS?

HELPING film a motion picture showing the gunning of North Dakota's game birds (with some waterfowl-ing thrown in to boot) was interesting because I had hunted both the Dakotas more than forty years ago. Then, prairie chickens (pinnated) and woods grouse and sharptails were natives abounding over those rugged open spaces. Pheasants and Hungarian partridges were unknown there then, but were imported later and now predominate. Ranching and agriculture in crescendo have streamlined once sterner country. But as far as plentiful game, wildfowl, and weather moods are concerned, it is still the same old lovely Dakotas layout. Floods, drought, or "crashes"; no region on the face of the earth can do a better comeback job. The Dakotas can take it, give it, and enjoy it.

In making motion pictures out of doors, the artistic still predominates. Why shouldn't a director seek and demand the ultimate in cloud effects, highlights and shadows, jagged buttes, flaming gulches, and picturesque moraines? The Dakotas have these, as well as game, in amounts and variety to make this region a photographer's heaven.

A gun or two stays with the photographers while assistants "drive" cornfields or wooded gulches, pushing running birds into the air for film-recorded flights and kills. Otherwise, any true shooting picture takes hard work and some amazingly dexterous and untiring use of hand cameras by patient operators trudging behind expectant gunners and tautened dogs. Working through tightly brushed creek bottoms, steep gullies, and stubble, and keeping poised to catch both shooter and quarry in split-second action, brings both operators out catching their breaths.

But to draw soulful "ohs" and "ahs" from movie-goers stirred by instinctive appreciation for nature's beauties, there just must be birds on hand for those thrill-packed moments of scenic climax for game and gun. In all outdoor art there is nothing more callously nauseating than the repetitious mopping-up of quail bebies or ducks lowering over decoys. Supreme film art in the shooting field rests on beautiful surroundings, tense expectancy, and surprise action in man, dog, bird, and gun contacts.

Sometimes sheer luck steps in and lends a hand; the gun and the cameraman get a break as to light, flush, and kill. It may mean just a frame or two snapped, but it is great stuff for the screen. But these lucky moments are rare, and there is no known way to make matters click and placate outdoor shooting art other than to plant pen-reared birds to shoot against selected backgrounds, with proper light and carefully controlled action.

So, driving hundreds of miles about North Dakota's countryside, we usually trucked along a crate of pen-reared pheasants and Huns for use in spring-traps. When the director "whoa'd" and flagged down the caravan, we knew he had either hit the scenery and cloudland jackpot, or sighted a sure-fire setting for wild game against a background. In either case, all hands were due to work fast before some gorgeous cloud bank disappeared

or perfect light changed just enough to deflect sun-shot shadows fingering rolling headlands.

Small plywood traps were bird-loaded and hidden to suit rehearsed camera angles; the guns and retriever were given final admonitions. Chief among such is, "Don't miss." The trap's sides press against steel springs, and it is sprung by a long cord and yanked trigger. At "Action!" we guns advanced, the traps "Jack-in-the-boxed," and the birds were supposed to flush against literally heaven-sent scenery. But, damn it all, these tame game-farm birds just wouldn't fly. They'd simply walk off or hunker down with a "fancy-meeting-you-here" look in their beady eyes. You couldn't waste film by rushing or kicking them into flight. Our miraculous retriever, Tip, sat down and sneered. It ended by our having to hand-toss those pen-reareds from ditches or from behind sheltering wheat stooks.

The game-farm gun-fodder we used for art's sake did not come from North Dakota. That state has enough wild game birds in its vast reaches to strain the nation's film or cartridge industry. Here a license-buyer automatically becomes top dog on about six thousand acres of gunning all to himself. That's how big the country is, up there. Game pretty much all over it, too. Hungarian partridges dart about park shrubbery; we actually filmed and shot pheasants within sight of the state capitol building in Bismarck. Below us, in a swale, a chap working two Brittany spaniels downed two cock pheasants and almost shot himself into the picture doing it. Later, working down a road some sixty miles southwest of Bismarck, this writer, under camera observation, scored three successive doubles on pheasant, Hun, and sharptails in a half-mile distance and twenty minutes' time. But to get back to those game-farm birds.

My companion gun, Melvin O. Steen, Chief of the Fish and

Game Section of the Missouri Conservation Commission (a North Dakotan by birth and a corking shot), had along his five-year-old retriever, Tip. Tip is a cross of black Labrador bitch with a grand Gordon setter shooting dog—a massive, coal-black combination of both parents. He is a rugged, but streamlined, brainy fellow. He knows about fifty words, and guesses successfully at a lot more. He travels everywhere with Mel and, on shooting trips, parks himself under the latter's bed. While a puppy he used to get stepped on so often that he sought cover and the system worked.

Tip finds and takes charge of Mel's car, permitting no intrusions other than by known friends with the countersign. He does a perfect job of non-slip, or break-on-command only—provided circumstances of the shooting field warrant. In rough-and-tumble hunting on land or water, Tip conducts the business according to Mel's orders or their joint size-up of a situation. What Tip doesn't know about locating and retrieving the wild game birds of North Dakota has been torn out of the book. But he had never before been sent after a tame, game-farm bird.

The first time our director's passion for the ultimate demanded stage setting along those lines, was the beginning of the commencement of matters with Tip. When these pheasants merely strutted off and all but doffed their hats, a disgusted helper rushed them into flight and they were slain out of hand. Mel gave Tip his cue and the big dog hotfooted it to the nearest dead bird. He picked it up, spat it out, and stood licking his chops with every evidence of disgust. Even under semicompulsion, and with the cameras stopped, his response was labored and even rebellious. The dog wanted no part of that game. And thereafter, no matter whether or what, a dead *wild* bird had to

be substituted for the retrieves. What was the trouble? We'll get an idea, later.

Two weeks before Tip's refusal to fetch pen-reareds, I had paired with Martin Hogan to judge the 1944 Minnesota Retriever Trials, near Minneapolis. There, as is customary in such events, the Chesapeake, Labradors, and Goldens were worked on 100 percent gun-killed game-farm pheasants. Tame mallards were used for the water work. To win in all such competitions there must be swift, cheerful, heads-up, brainy, tender brings. But be it remembered, no matter what their natural or innermost sensitive scruples, most such retriever trial candidates are broken, to a large extent, on game-farm birds. They have to be. Nevertheless, many of them are topnotchers under hard hunting conditions, too. In trials, they've become used to pen-stuff, and sense merely the competition just as thoroughbreds do in horse racing.

From long experience with various gun dogs, I knew, too, that some of them intensely dislike retrieving soft, sticky-feathered birds like doves. And that some bird dogs exhibit distinct aversion to both scenting, pointing, and fetching shot-down pen-reared bobwhites. So I put the question, as a whole, to Martin Hogan, who, incidentally, is considered the nation's top authority on retrievers. I am permitted to quote.

Dear Nash—

There isn't the least doubt about it, experienced gun dogs don't care to handle hand-reared game. Their behavior is quite different even before they see the game. They are between two minds; whether to handle 'em, or leave the damn things alone. Game raised in pens, most of them overcrowded, reek to high heaven a long time after liberation. Their food, too, is so very much different from that of wild game that it is bound to affect their scent; that is, if they live that long. I think the experienced dog's reaction to pen-reared birds is very much on a par with our own. Dogs trained on

tame birds show much more keenness when worked on wild ones. One is a distasteful chore; the other, a pleasure.

I am no authority on quail, but I have had more than forty years with gun dogs, the pheasant, and the Hun. For the two latter species, certainly, there is no method to compare to netting full-grown birds on one area and releasing them as soon as possible on another suitable area. Such change of blood works wonders with home stock. Food, cover, and good nesting accommodation and protection from their enemies (the last-named is important) are the main things to remember. A change of blood every five years is recommended. I have seen a brace of birds to the acre shot and a good breeding stock left on estates managed as I have mentioned. Pen-reared game of any species, be it young or full-grown, stands a poor chance of survival when turned out to shift for itself. Because such just doesn't know how. The "wild" is bred out of it, and it falls easy prey to its enemies.

MARTIN HOGAN

Barrington, Illinois

So Mel Steen's Tip, on his initial contact with pen-reared game, was but counterpart to gun-dog reaction generally when on poultry-scented quarry. During our stay in beautiful and hospitable North Dakota, we bagged full license quotas and recorded four wild species (not including wildfowl) on film. Ninety-eight per cent of the birds recorded and shot were under natural conditions and Tip retrieved all those that came under his observation. But he balked on pen-reareds.

Our remarks thus far must not be taken as criticisms of retriever trials using pen-reared birds from either state-owned or private game farms. Retriever trials must, to a large extent, be synthetic, but they are extraordinarily necessary and useful, to say nothing of economically and recreationally sound. These activities use up a lot of birds—more than can usually be found wild except under the best of conditions—and if we had small game farms, backed by private enterprise, distributed around the

country to supply the retriever trials, we could get better birds into healthier cover more quickly. Especially if backed by sportsmen-farmers' collaboration in improving food and cover conditions.

But mass production of game birds as a main method to improve hunting generally is something else again. There are a lot of angles, some of them downright startling, to this kind of "management," and they all add up to a general reshaping of a lot of once-popular but now-discredited ideas on how wild game must be managed to get the most out of gunning. But let's examine the systems of production and release of bobwhite quail in some of our southern states. To set the scene and give the background on quail populations, we are privileged to quote from a paper by Herbert L. Stoddard, author of the nation's outstanding treatise on the bobwhite. The following quotes were read at the 6th North American Wildlife Conference at Memphis, Tennessee, in 1941. They give a true and vivid picture of the life progress of *Colinus Virginianus*, as well as some pointed thoughts for land management in wildlife's future book. Writes Mr. Stoddard:

A surprise to many will be the fact that a great deal of the southern land where upland game has been brought to abundance through management, has had an unusually long period of occupation by man. Some coastals have been settled since 1670. Too frequently is the history of the land overlooked, although land-handling systems of the past have had a profound effect on both present and potential game carrying capacities.

The period of exploitive cultivation—as early as 1800 many fields were admittedly worn out on the strongest soils—will long be felt. "Cash crops" of those earlier periods might be likened to "dust-bowl" results, but, fortunately, they occurred in a region of heavy rainfall—consequently, when prices fell and land was thrown out of cultivation, it reverted to woodlands. Little thought

was given to game, which could not have been very abundant in farmed areas—for the land was usually cultivated to the very creek banks.

“Patch-farming” succeeded intensive cotton farming. Small, scattered fields made balanced quail territory. The practice of woods burning that formerly had been conducted by the Indians and early pioneers was continued in second-growth pine—and kept it in ideal condition for quail. Today, our management consists of duplicating conditions accompanying that *third stage* farming. In earlier days, hunters were not numerous. Management was unnecessary; hence game management, as we know it now, is a recent development. Drastic need has arisen in the South for determining the carrying capacity of lands as well as *increasing* that capacity, especially for quail. Lately, however, the following trends have become so unfavorable to quail that the carrying capacity of many unmanaged lands has been lowered or actually ceased to exist.

(1) Many old fields, particularly pine woodlands, are being protected from fire and are rapidly becoming unfit for quail. Food supplies have diminished and predators increased. [Author’s note: It should be understood that while burning of pine-reverted fields is recommended by Mr. Stoddard for conditions in the Deep South, there are many other areas in the quail range—the Ozarks, for example and more northerly areas, where woods burning is anything but good quail management. On the contrary, it is one of the chief handicaps to game in general.]

(2) More intensive grazing, resulting from increasing numbers of livestock, has drastically lessened the carrying capacity of a large aggregate acreage in the South.

(3) Fields are becoming larger and planted more solidly to *one crop* with the advent of small tractors and mechanized farming. Strip cropping and other soil-building practices are alleviating some disadvantages caused by this type of agriculture.

A few years ago, sportsmen and hunting clubs (all with means), depended almost entirely on leased lands for hunting; today, preserves are mostly owned and under management of the owners. Only through full control of the land can good hunting be achieved

under present agricultural practices. Because so much of the public hunting in the South is poor, many do not realize what really good quail shooting is. In our opinion, good quail land is that upon which from 15 to 20 or more covies can be found in a six hour day when hunted over with good dogs.

On the types of land with which we work, it ordinarily requires about 10,000 acres to produce an annual average kill of 1,000 quail. If the soil is poor, more intensive (and expensive) development is necessary to maintain this average than if soils are basically fertile and good producers of native quail feeds. There are some properties with soils so poor that production of such kill is impossible; likewise, on small areas of exceptional land, the yield may be at a higher rate. This does not mean that development can not be so intensified as to produce *more birds*. It simply means that it is impractical and uneconomical to intensify management beyond a certain point on most land just because it is *cheaply* available.

An average quail population of a bird per two or three acres over large areas can be maintained at comparatively small cost. To double such population, however, might cost ten times as much. Experience (on preserves) has shown that for best results covies should not be moved by dog and gun more than once a week. Preferably, not more than once in two or three weeks. Hunting parties usually cover about a thousand acres per day. Consequently, large acreages are preferable, especially in regions with dense cover to which quail will retreat if disturbed too often.

In determining whether a given property can support good shooting, there are many things to consider besides food and cover. Of greatest importance, we believe, is *the soil*. Without drainage, too, native foods do not flourish, and standing water may be a menace to young quail. As a rule, soils once cultivated produce better and more varied crops of native feeds. Fertility of the soil has to be considered in relation to brush control; for on good soils, burning may have to be done almost yearly, especially during years of heavy rainfall during growing season.

The presence of cattle on a tract must be considered in relation to the soil as well as to the effects of grazing. If land has been grazed heavily the year round, desirable quail foods may have been

largely eradicated. To bring these back is a gradual process. The proximity of quail and turkey land to areas maintained under fire protection may also play a large part in determining "carrying capacity." "Rough" areas may have become havens for predators that menace managed lands. Also, whether mammalian predators of such an area have been kept in check by night hunting with dogs or by commercial trappers, may be an important factor. The harvesting of the game bird crop must also be considered, for a property may have a high carrying capacity and still its quail may be of little value for sport if they can not be conveniently hunted. Lands broken by numerous small, brush-choked ravines may produce large numbers of quail, but the birds may feed in such inaccessible areas (particularly if too closely hunted) that they are not available. The *availability* of the bird crop is just as important as the number of birds on the land.

It may thus readily be seen that the estimation of present, as well as potential carrying capacities of southern quail lands, is most difficult. Much of the judgment needed for such appraisal must be hardened in the fire of experience.

So speaks the southland's best known and most experienced master of quail culture in all of its ramifications of soil calibers, carrying capacities, populations, kills, food patches, controlled burnings, predator campaigns, grazing, fencing, and general costs. We have been permitted to quote him to show the operations faced by state game departments of this and other regions of the same general conditions, in seeking to apply to public and almost wholly uncontrolled lands the many phases of management in operation on areas privately and probably more expensively controlled. Have such departments enough income to spend a sufficient cut of license-buyers' money (meager as most such fees are) to do a real job of all such involvements? Is it possible for them to control even donated "farm refuges" tightly in all the needed restoration measures? To what extent has soil improvement become a game management practice,

compared to the releases of large numbers of pen-reared quail on poor soils without the ability to support a good crop of hardy wild birds? Well, it's obvious on the face of it that no game department in the country has the kind of money it takes to improve soil and land use to carry more quail. More, few of them have the power to do so if the money were forthcoming, because, for one thing, controlling the use and improvement of land not in their ownership is out of their bailiwick. But in that case, what can be done? More of that later. Right now, before we leave Mr. Stoddard, let's get his purely personal estimate of pen-reared quail. Be careful to note that Stoddard, an eminently open-minded person, classes as exceptions to the rule birds raised by "hardening methods," and liberated where wild birds are few, but foods ample and predator control strict—in short, on preserves more or less dedicated to intensive land management, *not* on extensive areas under general agricultural use. Mr. Stoddard's letter follows:

Dear Nash—

Our twenty years of quail study indicate strongly that the money spent on the artificial propagation and release of the usual mass, pen-reared stuff is largely money wasted. Sometimes quail reared by certain methods, well pre-hardened, liberated on understocked grounds where favored foods are abundant and where their worst natural enemies have been well taken care of, or are very scarce, have adjusted themselves to the wild and given good shooting. But this, in my opinion, is the exception and not the rule. The product of the usual quantity production plants, liberated hit or miss, is usually lost before hunting season. And many do not give any worth-while sport or dog work even if they do survive. It may take them months to acquire wild behavior. We have had considerable experience ourselves with the indifference of bird dogs toward pen-reared quail. They usually ignore them entirely. It has been funny sometimes when movie outfits have borrowed pen quail to get certain fake close-ups. The dogs paid no more attention to the

quail than they would to trees or bushes. I agree that they must have a different odor, and may add that their flesh both looks and tastes different. I want no pen-reared game on my table. You may, of course, quote me on anything I've published or written; I can rely on you to do this properly and fairly.

HERBERT L. STODDARD

Every game and fish commission in the country is chronically faced with two particularly difficult problems: game management on areas largely under control of other agencies, few of which give game a place in their plans, and the fact that many hunters, no matter how conditions may have changed, think said commissions should still be able to supply an original abundance of wildlife. These two factors together have, more than any others, inhibited the development of a thorough understanding between the conservation agencies and the sportsmen they are trying to serve. Basically, it amounts to something of an indictment, somewhere along the line, for lack of modern public relations.

The first problem, structurally, is simple and easy to grasp. Most of the lands with which any commissions can work are lands on which wildlife interests have a very minor place in the use that is made of them by their owners. In short, game commissions cannot select the quality or dictate the use of land; they must take it or leave it, as is. But the second phase, created by "clamor groups" among the hunters and sportsmen (and fishermen) is not so simple to understand. The philosophy back of it is, that no matter how the forests have been cut and burned, water areas drained and dried up, the streams waste-filled and polluted, the prairies plowed and denuded, and the very soil itself eroded and lost; with most of the country in the hands of individuals with almost unrestricted freedom to continue doing

such things, the abundance of game the land used to carry should still be there.

Faced with these problems, many conservation agencies tried the method of raising the game themselves, and turning it out on the changed land. This began as a sincere effort, and to the hunters who could read the production figures and see the birds turned loose, it was great stuff. In fact, pen-rearing became so popular that when certain game men and commissions able to hold office long enough to see what was going on began to wise up to the fact that a bird in the bush was worth a hundred in the pen, they faced a long, hard, and bitter fight to stop the appealing, appalling waste. Even now there are the two roads to follow—the path of restoration of wild game through natural means brought about by salesmanship (public relations), education, and co-operation with all land improvement programs; or, the easier way of giving in to the demand for spectacular expenditures and slap-dash, razzle-dazzle “management” consisting of turning out phony game birds by the millions and statistics enough to quiet the pressure groups. The same being made up of unthinking “license-buyer hunters” who haven’t yet figured out that game bird phonies and figures don’t produce the game and sport they really want, but are merely postponing an evil day for their gunning future.

The existence and use of this second road menaces and retards restoration in what was once the best game-producing country in the world (and, actually, the one with the highest level of education). What is the trouble? Are the “get-game-quick” boys fooling themselves when they put the pressure on their game departments for this kind of “management”? Is sportsmanship declining to where it no longer cares what or how it shoots? Or are the complaining hunters so bewildered by the seeming inconsistency of the drastic “about-face” from pen-

rearing to land management that they turn in not unnatural self-defense to the one clear-cut measure of hunting success they can pin down—*the amount of game brought to bag?*

These are questions any thoughtful sportsman (or, for that matter, commercial or industrial beneficiary of the outdoors) must ask himself as he surveys what has happened to the game, the sport, and their management during the past few decades. The only way he can find a true answer is to start thinking and literally rediscover, if possible, the nature of the great American tradition of free and abundant hunting. As a beginning, he can review the few, simple, fundamental natural principles that rule game and game production; this will help him come out with a clearer understanding of what he wants and how it can be gotten—maybe; if he wants it bad enough to pitch in and help get it.

For, be it remembered, we approach in these United States an era of big game, marsh, and upland gunning now tagged by some wildlife authorities and technicians as “managed shooting.” This presumes enough state- or nation-owned or -leased lands and waters (with perhaps sanctuary areas within or adjacent thereto) on which, at nominal servicing fees, properly credentialed hunters may shoot subject to federal and state regulations. The fees are for servicing personnel of enforcement, upkeep, environmental and predator controls and practices.

A not inconsiderable number of such areas already have in force “managed shooting.” Some are working out satisfactorily. Others, operated on a “trial by error” basis, or poorly engineered basically into what amount to starvation areas, are proving headaches to agencies and commissions involved. Just as headaches are mere symptoms of inward involvements demanding checkups, so “managed shooting” falls afoul of exposure to rank commercialization of wildlife resources. Next of kin are ex-

ploitation and downright asinine waste. For when the "public," so-called, is given absolutely free access to anything from a golf course to a public shooting ground, these will, unless supervised and made to pay their own ways decently, be ruined in jig time. Taking a coarser sight, we discover the carelessness of landowners who lease their quail fields without investigation of the sporting status of the lessees. Often they open the door to vandals who merely shoot off the natural bird stock in a season or two, give up the leases, and hunt others for a repetition. But let's review what, fundamentally, a sportsman wants.

The very first thing with which he can start is that there is wildlife. *Wildlife!* There's a lot of meaning packed into that word, especially in its first four letters. It takes just those four letters to spell the difference between a fat barnyard duck and a streamlined wild mallard. Or a silly, domesticated turkey and a wise, majestic forest gobbler. In short, those letters that spell "w-i-l-d" are the key to the important difference between game birds and tame birds. And likewise between game mammals and their all but domesticated counterparts.

To the experienced or even imaginatively wishful hunter, wildness expresses all the qualities that go to make hunting a natural, thrilling, and challenging sport. Sportsmanship and what it stands for could never have arisen from the barnyard. It is the direct antithesis of the slaughterhouse atmosphere. It belongs to the clean out-of-doors, and to the clear, wholesome relationships of man amid nature and its unspoiled dwellers. The first fact on which the thoughtful hunter can firmly stand, then, is that hunting, in the sportsman's sense, calls for wild game and clean ethics in taking it.

What the average hunter wants out of hunting is next in line for examination. In purchasing a hunting license he may be motivated by a desire to (a) indulge his proclivity for sport, or

(b) get his fee's share of good eating meat cheap. What his particular motive really is, is highly important. It makes a great difference in just what he expects to find in hunting opportunities, and what he would call competent game administration provided by his funds.

If he falls into class (a), he will view game laws and bag limits as one means of distributing harvestable game fairly. His thinking capacity along such lines reasons correctly that in the regulating function, most game departments or commissions are merely "rationing boards" for a state's wildlife resources. But if he checks up in (b) category, he is principally just after meat. He will regard open seasons, bag limits, and sportsmanlike regulations as pledges that in return for what he considers a pretty stiff fee (\$2.00 or less), he is entitled to the full amount of meat represented by the maximum daily and seasonal bag limits.

Chances are that no matter what or which be his motive, the amount of game taken looms large in the average hunter's list of criteria of a successful hunt. Perhaps this represents the only tangible evidence of his skill as a token of enjoyment. The spell of the out-of-doors, the joy of watching a good dog work, the pleasant exercise and relief from ordinary worries—these can't be brought back and explained very well. A full game bag, on the other hand, needs no explanation—no matter how acquired. But too often acquirement, sporting or otherwise, leads the hunter himself to place undue emphasis on the *killed* game as the *main* purpose and the main *measure* of his hunt. In other words, the real purpose and value of the sporting element is quite subordinated.

Is this all the hunter's fault? We don't think so. Publicity programs and Chamber-of-Commerce types of advertising have helped the hunter adopt this tape measure of hunting success,

by emphasizing the tangible and easily used and explained figures of *game killed* to lure vacationists or to justify this or that management program. When a hunter reads enough of these exciting figures, the kill is bound to begin to figure large in his personal thinking.

The trouble with this situation is that once started, it is (as we will show later) hard to stop. It becomes habit-forming. And when the amount of game killed becomes the principal measure of both management and hunting success, the difference between the sport-hunter and the meat-hunter has thinned to a hair. Likewise, a game management agency fostering such a measurement comes dangerously close to the status of a purveyor of flying and walking meat, instead of a guardian and instigator of fine sport and recreation.

The thing grows. The hunter's attention, being called to meat, wants *more* meat. And a game department just about has to try to be consistent, and somehow deliver the flesh—not ten years from now, but this year, next year, and every year. That's when the temptation to take the easy way out—to pen-rear game and publish big figures on birds raised and released to add to harvest figures and prove that all-out action is being taken—becomes really strong. Added temptation is the knowledge that such figures will satisfy a lot of hunters. To the average gunner, birds released still mean just that many more flyers for him to buy a chance on. If he doesn't collect, he is less likely to blame the program than the farmers, the weather, other hunters, predators, and the hawk family in general. But sometime, suddenly, or dimly, it may occur to him that great game-farm programs are sterile eggs, and then if he's really a good sport he will admit that *his* pressure helped the game department to lay them. All the big build-up somehow turns to ashes in his mouth.

The awakening pay-off comes when the statistics-flingers and

shot-fingers alike slowly begin to realize that the crowding of more dollars down the huge game-farm rat hole doesn't make the harvest's figures rise as they should. For some reason these pampered pen-pets don't "come out and fight." The reason is very simple, and for that reason probably difficult to realize. But now it can be told. Pen-reared birds simply don't survive by comparison. That is common knowledge now. If not to the average hunter, at least certainly with most of the really informed game commissions. Nor is it knowledge soon to be forgotten. It was bought with hunters' license fees at high and even astounding prices.

The reason why most pen-reared birds don't survive is also simple. They are *not* wild. It takes wild birds to live in wild conditions, for the quality of "wildness" expresses all the attributes that make it possible for a wild creature to live *where it has to live*. In daily competition with other wild creatures, with predators, man, and weather. And to raise its young to be as free and wild as their parents. Scientists have actually measured this quality of wildness. They have done more; they reveal that captivity, domestication, and game-farm conditions actually decrease *wildness* and replace it with *tameness*. They indicate that attempts to increase game by barnyard methods produce birds of barnyard quality—that such methods actually take the *wild* out of *wildlife*.

In Missouri, Dr. A. Starker Leopold, working with the Missouri Conservation Commission under the Federal Aid to Wildlife Program, found that the chief physical difference between tame turkeys and wild turkeys is the size of the adrenal and pituitary glands and brains. These organs were much larger in wild turkeys than in tame turkeys or even "wild" pen-reared stock. The Conservation Commission of Missouri had been

assisting a private breeder in his attempts to produce a good quality of nearly-wild turkey in large numbers for release.

These hybrids could, unlike pure wild turkeys, be raised in pens; theoretically, seven back-crosses from a half-wild hen to native wild gobblers should produce a strain better than 99 per cent wild. These hybrids were released, mostly under protection, on refuges. And better than 75 per cent of them *died* the first year. Most of the rest took refuge (those two words are important) in neighboring barnyards—and a few lived. But in no case did they increase nearly as fast as the wild stock still remaining.

On the basis of such fact-finding the Missouri Conservation Commission abandoned the experiment. The findings that definitely settled the matter were that pen-life encouraged the tamer birds to live. The wilder birds couldn't stand conditions, and died in the pens. Thus, as fast as wildness was being bred into the birds, it was being taken out of them through death in the pens and because life in the pens encouraged the birds tame enough to live to become tamer still. There was no way to get around a condition like that. It has a counterpart in many aspects of bobwhite quail culture.

The Michigan Department of Conservation published the results of a study in 1943, entitled, "Pen-Reared Pheasants Can't Compete." The investigation showed that very few of the pen-reared birds survived after release. Even birds turned out just before the hunting season did so little to improve hunting success that the calculated cost of each pheasant bagged was \$16.20. Costs, however, are by no means the whole story. Realization grows among hunters that products of the game farms are specimens at which even many of the good gun dogs are beginning to turn up their high-powered noses. More and more hunters are reporting that their pheasant and quail dogs refuse

to handle on pen-reareds. And to a dog man that is a real blow; to say nothing of perhaps getting the animal some undue blame, and worse, punishment perhaps. There must be an explanation for such disinclination on a dog's part, just as there is for great game-farm bird losses at times. What is there in game-farm treatment that so changes fowl they can't survive where wild parents do? Why the offishness of gun dogs to cooped stock?

Let's re-examine those findings on bird brains and glands. Let's tie in a few well-known facts about practical hunting. Not to get too technical, the medical facts on the way glands work are about as follows. When the brain recognizes a situation calling for extra-quick or extra-strong action (as for example when a game bird senses danger pressure) the glands are stimulated and a heavy charge of adrenalin is released into the bloodstream. This acts like choking a cold motor. The muscles are able to act much more quickly and strongly than normally.

Endocrine glands are tied up together. When one is affected, the others are; this includes the glands that secrete scent. It is well known, for example, that animals and even man, when startled, release what has been called "the fear scent." And that other animals are very much excited by smelling this release. Coon hunters know that when the fellow discovers he is being chased and "drops it into high," the dogs really begin to sound off when they strike and open up on what is known as a "hot" trail. Throughout the animal world, releasing of the fear scent by one creature makes it liable to attack by others. Can this be kith to the pointing of running quail bebies a long way off? There is even reason to believe that fear scent differs considerably from ordinary B.O. For example, pen-reared quail have a very strong odor—a kind of poultry smell. That this is not what makes a dog point or trail is shown by his disgust or puzzle-

ment when he comes into sudden, exploratory contact with dumb, pen-reared stock.

Why isn't normal scent released in pen-reared stock? Two explanations sound logical. Both may be true. One is that because such birds are fairly tame, they are not particularly afraid when men and dogs approach. Their glands remain unstimulated. But the findings of Leopold and others with regard to the actual degeneration of the brain-gland system in the game farm support a more likely theory. To wit: the glands are not capable of acting properly even if the birds *were* startled or frightened. These surmises may not entirely explain the actions of good gun dogs on pen-reareds; only experiments can finally prove it. But it does give the most reasonable explanation offered to date. Further evidence that such birds simply don't recognize, or don't know how to react to danger, is shown by the shocking losses of pen-reared stock by predation. There have been many studies made and many articles written about this. Many of them point to the inescapable fact that far more released birds are killed by predators than ever survive or are produced by them as young.

Speed, power, cunning—the ability to sense danger quickly and act like chain lightning—these are the necessary attributes of wild birds. The bobwhite that glimpses the hawk soonest and beats it to instantly sized-up or pre-sensed escape cover fastest, is the quail that survives. If the bird hasn't the equipment when raided, chalk up a loss. Thousands of hunters are conversant with such too obvious tragedies afield, even with wild birds. If the habit of producing young at the time conditions are best for survival has been upset by the common hatchery practice of inducing early egg production, normal reproduction simply can't go on. If captivity, selective breeding, and hand-feeding on mash instead of natural foods take away gland-

salvage equipment, they also take away from the bird a better chance for life, for reproduction, and for being real game for the hunter's pleasure and dollars.

What can a bird be given that will replace lost wilderness instinct and make it predator-proof? How can such a bird be treated except as a nearly tame creature that has to have barnyard protection in order to live? The only known way, out in the open that challenges even wild flights, is to kill off *all* the known enemies of such ill-adapted halfwits. In other words, by complete predator control. That not only calls for spending a lot of money but might unbalance nature. Predators have a way of continually boring in, and even from long distances. To get them all, it would be necessary to kill them out over tremendous areas. Maybe such a program would be worth the money; that is, if all the sportsmen of the future want to shoot is tame birds. But let's fact-find a bit and use the open mind.

Complete predator control has already been tried. In 1931 and 1932 the New York Conservation Department ran an experiment in which they tried, by every means known to science and practical trapping, to get rid of all the predators on two areas totaling, together, only a few thousand acres. They decided, two years later, that predator control was a lot easier to talk about than to accomplish. In their own words, "elimination was markedly successful on the long-eared owl, red-tailed hawk and small brown weasel; moderately successful on the horned-owl, marsh hawk and crow. Species that have shown little or no reduction included the Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, red fox, gray fox, skunk, domestic cat, red squirrel and raccoon. . . . Considering," the report continues, "only the more important grouse predators, control proved effective on the horned-owl, crow and small brown weasel; made little impression on Cooper's hawks, sharp-shins, red and gray foxes, skunk

and raccoon." This is the best job that men determined on complete elimination of all predators for experimental purposes could do on 2,127 acres. It shows what the average game department would be up against if it tried "control" on the grand scale.

It is still possible, again, that low-cost, effective methods of predator control can be found. But that wouldn't end the trouble. What would farmers and biologists and the other fellows who value many of the predators because they keep in check destructive rodents and insects have to say? What would the hunters say when they found that removing predators would be removing their pen-reared birds just one step more from being wild game? It would bring them down just that much closer to the level of barnyard chickens and ducks; because a bird that has nothing to fear and fight against has no reason for being wild.

Maybe some natural principle is being violated; one that says wildness is a quality that comes only from living under wild conditions. To maintain it, natural conditions that produce it must be maintained. That gives answer, doesn't it, to those of us who have decided that it isn't the shape, the size, or the color of a quail that endears the brave little bird to us; it is his *game-ness*. So what? Game, to retain its game qualities must be reared and brought up naturally in surroundings where the qualities are encountered, encouraged, and maintained at high level because they have to be—namely, *in the wild*.

Having approached the problem from what we may call the physical and psychological side, let's turn to some of the states themselves, and agencies, which have encountered the problem of pen-reared quail as opposed to methods of planting wild birds. How many have concluded they've gotten off on the wrong foot, either or both ways? After all, it is a problem of

attempting to provide plenty of supposedly wild game for everybody. Maybe it is just game in name only, but the good intent is there. Is it a case of frustration at every turn? If so, whose fault is it? Are barnyard methods, after all, plain common sense? After all, that's what developed tame chickens, domestic turkeys, and other fowl in the first place. Remember: the Huns and pheasants—millions and millions of them of the Dakotas and elsewhere—came from wild birds crated from abroad, released, and, in some cases, propagated here, later. It's all a case of wild ancestry. So what?

In the quail country of the South, the states of Tennessee and Mississippi offer sharp and interesting contrasts as to methods of bobwhite quail management. Let's examine Tennessee's system, up until very recently the typical paternalistic mass-production and release type, first.

For perhaps ten years Tennessee maintained at Buffalo Springs a game farm of something over four hundred acres with costs of around a million and a half dollars. The young quail were raised on wire and seemed as good as any such stock. The reported capacity of the plant is around 50,000 quail a year. Not unnaturally the problem of spring or fall placements is important with a stock like that; it costs tremendously to hold huge numbers of birds over from fall to spring.

According to Game Department officials the state-wide demand for pen-reared quail built up to a point where a changed policy would be a serious problem. Huge production in itself demands a larger release in the fall for immediate shooting. Yet, of seventy questionnaired wardens who had been releasing quail for years, all but one favored spring releases. They also liked "random releases" better than "game sanctuary agreement releases." It was about fifty-fifty whether to close areas of release, or not. There seemed to be disagreement between farmers apply-

ing for and getting quail and the release officers as to where the birds should be put out. These are typical troubles that dog most great release programs.

In spite of the fact that the officers estimate a 40-per-cent survival of fall-released birds, and a 73-per-cent survival of spring-released quail, during past seasons gunners reported quail shooting in middle and east Tennessee in the doldrums, while in the west it has become increasingly indifferent, with outcries against fox predation. The only answer is that the estimated survival of released birds did not carry over into the crop, either the released stock itself or production from it. Lack of a good follow-up system, due to shortage of technicians, prevented discovery of just what did happen to the game-farm releases.

But let's quote a letter from Mr. Paul J. Mathes, Conservation Commissioner of Tennessee. Mr. Mathes is a comparatively recent appointee, this, 1945, being his first legislative passage since reappointment under Governor McCord.

Dear Nash:

Here are the replies to your questions of January 15, 1945, and you may quote me on anything in this letter. The average production of quail at the Buffalo Springs game farm for the two-year period from April 1, 1942, to April 1, 1944, was 32,290 per year. The average cost per bird was 91¢. The average spring release was 7,656, and the average autumn release, 23,972. 65 per cent were released on sanctuary agreements, 3.4 per cent on game refuge areas, and 30.8 at random. The "random release" is on lands not under agreement with the State, and preferably without the landowner's knowledge.

The production and release of quail cost 13.43% of the sportsman's license fee. The planting of quail appears to be very popular with sportsmen and farmers and has encouraged them to provide more food, cover and protection for the birds. No accurate poll has been taken, however.

It is believed by those in charge that, after planting, the quail are able to take care of themselves, and we see little difference between the pen-reared birds and the wild birds. We do not believe the release of wild turkeys has been as successful as the release of quail, because there are so few places in the State ideally suited for turkeys. [Note by author:—a sobering statement, considering the pathetic status of wild deer also in the State—indicating a serious deterioration of habitat.]

The Commission has not discussed the idea of purchasing wild birds in large numbers because they are not available other than Mexican birds, which, in the past, cost considerably more than those we raised. We regret we cannot give you the benefit of the State's game technician's advice at this time, due to the fact that all our technicians have been called into the armed services and we are unable to replace them with competent men. However, it is hoped that they will soon be back with us and the postwar period will see great improvements in our game division. We do know in previous years the technicians were very enthusiastic over the possibility of pen-reared birds. We trust the above is the information desired.

Sincerely yours,

PAUL S. MATHES, Commissioner

Since the above letter was written, Tennessee policy has changed, and it may now be described as in the process of revising its program from production in the mass and mere scatteration, to a soil and nature program. Thus no more comment is needed, other than that the birds produced and released apparently did not keep the larger part of the state from going "into the doldrums" as regards quail shooting, and that this—as always—is more convincing than any amount of written or spoken argument to show the sportsmen and administrators the true "value" of wrong-alley methods of increasing game. Who or what brought about this "change of policy" deponents say or know not.

Now let's take a look at Mississippi's slant on pen-reareds.

GAME & FISH COMMISSION

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI, JAN. 30, 1945

Dear Nash,

Mississippi has steered clear of the hatchery idea on quail even though there is pressure at times for us to have one. I believe a quail hatchery is a wonderful thing for a publicity article, but I think it is absolutely nil insofar as raising birds for restocking and for shooting. If a bird is domesticated enough to lay a sufficient number of eggs and the birds are raised in captivity, they soon learn to regard the covering as a protection, they know where the feed hopper is and when they are released they do not know where to look or what to do.

Of course there are those who say that you can't breed the wild out of wildlife and that instinct will immediately cause them to go into the natural haunts looking for food and cover. I cannot believe that because we did experiment with some pen-reared turkeys at one time and most of them found their ways to some farmer's house or were killed or died. We have abandoned the turkey proposition altogether and the only quail we have released are those we purchased from Mexico.

You are undoubtedly familiar with our farm-game program where we furnish seed to farmers to improve the habitat, plant the fence rows and ditch banks and, in some areas, planted food patches. We distributed several tons of lespedeza seed and about a hundred and twenty thousand of the lespedeza bi-color plants. As soon as the war is over we intend to get on the farm-game program in a big way. I believe it is the real answer and there are very few places that actually need stocking if they are given protection and food and cover is provided.

The cost of raising quail in a hatchery is prohibitive, and, if the real truth were known about the price of each bird released from a hatchery, it would be astounding. I hope that Mississippi will never go into the quail hatchery business. A quail hunter (and by that I mean a dyed-in-the-wool sportsman) does not want to go

out and shoot a bird that will, or can, hardly fly and doesn't have a chance. He is out for sport, gets a lot of kick out of his dogs and the companionship of his fellow hunters. He is not out for meat and if that is what he wanted he would go buy him a good steak provided he had enough red points, or sell his dogs. Field trials have done a lot, as you know, toward encouraging people to get off the meat angle. And while I think a quail ranks tops in meat, a real quail hunter and the fellow who helps pay the bill for the game department does not want any half-tame, hand-raised stuff. He wants to go out and shoot something wild.

With kindest regards,

W. F. DEARMAN, Director

The State of Oklahoma maintains a quail hatchery at El Reno. Its capacity, for the plant is a fine one, can be "revved" up to 150,000 birds. But operational costs, labor, etc., now make for curtailments. At El Reno the strictest methods of sanitation prevail. It is my understanding that the Oklahoma department depends largely upon complete public relations and co-operation rather than mere mass planting. The bird recipients are required to show good land practices. Oklahoma maintains probably the most complete soil conservation program now going forward in the United States. This means terracing and state-wide small ponds with strip crops and rotated plantings, and plenty of check dams. Farmers are warned against too clean plowing as a cause of erosion and land-value reduction. There are soil analysis, woods lots plantings, controlled burnings, and greatest of all, the planting of shelter belts. Oklahoma's land-planned game program goes hand in hand with land use procedure, and to game authorities and experienced sportsmen, that's the only road back to restoration. There's only one question—if the land is being made to support wild game, why turn tame stuff out in it? Improving land doesn't eliminate the sporting drawbacks and the hazards to pen-reared birds that we've been talking

about, and birds produced cheaply in large numbers still won't be able to take it, in competition with wild ones.

The Missouri Conservation Commission has worked out the land-use approach with a different angle; in this, soil fertility is tied up with land use as being the basis of the amount, kind, quality, and distribution of the food and cover which in turn determine the kind, numbers, distribution, and thriftiness of game species. Studies proved beyond question that soil fertility is a basic factor in game management, just as it is in the management of crops and livestock. So close are the relationships that when game censuses were made on samples of each main soil type, and the figures expanded to the whole area represented by each sample, the differences stood out like sore thumbs, and the total figures came surprisingly close to totals gotten by other census methods. Just a few of the things that stood out were:

1. The best-quality game came from the most fertile soils (heavier coons, better-furred muskrats, etc.).
2. The biggest numbers and varieties of game lived on areas of moderate fertility.
3. The least numbers and poorest quality game came from areas of lowest fertility, even though such areas had most extensive cover.

Well, the answers aren't all in yet, but the implications are plain: to get the widest distribution of the most and best game, the Missouri Commission is convinced it has to work with the landowner, and with land improvement agencies, to help raise the fertility level of the depleted soils and improve land use everywhere. (Fish as well as game are affected, for erosion, siltation, and soil depletion ruin water areas even more quickly than they do game areas.) And a large part of its game management activities are being devoted to just that.

Another different angle in the Missouri program is the de-

pendence on natural rather than artificial propagation to fill up the improved habitats, as fast as they come, with native wild game that has proved for centuries that it can take it, given the food and cover it needs. There are quail in every one of the 114 counties, and more are raised in the wild each spring than the present summer and winter food and cover can take care of. This now-lost surplus, amounting to *several million birds a year*, is the natural, non-cost source of real game to improve hunting; it doesn't have to be raised, because it is already raised naturally. It only has to be saved.

Proof that land improvement increases game by saving it, is not lacking. On an area in central Missouri, developed by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service to improve soil fertility and land use, a 32-per-cent increase in coveys of quail was counted after just one year's pond building, gully planting, grazing reduction, liming and fertilizing, and planting and fencing out eroded spots. Rabbits, squirrels, waterfowl, prairie chickens, and fur-bearers increased even more—natural increase, without restocking.

When the commission took over in 1937, mass propagation and release of quail was stopped. In 1939, hunters had the best season in years; in 1945 the crop was even bigger. Game farms can't compete with nature's hatchery, in either quantity or quality production of worth-while game.

Well, game management through land management is gaining headway fast. As usual when traditions are scrapped, some states are in the lead, others are coming along, and some are lagging behind. As usual, too, it's the technicians and scientists that are breaking new ground, with the more thoughtful and experienced sportsmen the first to back them up. The new road is by far the most promising we've hit so far, but it isn't all clear ahead yet; there are still some curves to be taken.

How about artificial propagation in this new program? Well, Charles Gillham, of the Western-Winchester Game Restoration staff, recently contacted fourteen state game departments at their own headquarters and made an analysis of their respective programs. He did not find a single department that believed that the restocking of any form of wildlife can be accomplished successfully on a large scale simply by the releasing of pen-reared birds or semidomesticated animals. According to Gillham, correspondence in the East Alton (Western-Winchester game headquarters) files indicates that a majority of these states abandoned complete reliance on restocking with pen-reared birds at about the same time that Western-Winchester completed a research project in 1941 definitely proving the futility of restocking wide areas through the spring release of mature quail intended as breeding stock. In talking to the administrators and working biologists of these fourteen states, Gillham found general agreement that restocking with pen-reared game has only four uses in a modern game restoration program:

1. As an activity of private individuals or sportsmen's groups to augment fall shooting (presumably on intensively managed private grounds).
2. For field trials and the training of dogs.
3. For the public relations value accruing to a state game department through the release of pen-reared birds, under definite restrictions of habitat improvement, and making citizens game-conscious and inducing them to co-operate with the department.
4. To provide game birds and animals for field experimentation corresponding to the use of guinea pigs in a laboratory.

These uses seem reasonable enough. Certainly if individuals or clubs have the kind of money it takes, and have no objections to shooting pen-reared game, there is no good reason why they

should not raise and release suitable game on the land they own, under certain controls. These controls should be restrictions to see that such game does not become a public nuisance, or a menace to native wild game because of disease, undesirable characteristics, or competition.

The use of pen-reared stock for field and retriever trials has already been covered. Only, it would seem that here local hatcheries, backed by private enterprise—preferably the field trial groups—could produce better birds *on the grounds* than most large commercial or state-owned farms could afford to do.

The public relations angle is an axe that cuts two ways. No one can doubt that in some cases—say, in the beginning of a new program, or as a method to prove a point—the judicious release of pen-reared stock is both useful to secure co-operation and effective to stimulate needed improvements in food and cover. But it can slip out of hand so confoundedly easy, and change from an incentive to a main goal. Probably the only safe way to use it is under definite and clearly understood restrictions. For instance, a sportsmen's club or youth group might be stimulated to put good food and cover on a quailless area by receiving, after this has been done, an initial seed stock of birds, with the understanding that no more are to come. Another case in which pen-reared stock may be useful is in a clear-cut demonstration that this stock won't survive where wild quail won't live. Demonstrations like this are often more effective than printed or spoken reasoning.

Finally, sometimes floods, fires, or other disasters wipe native stock out of areas so large that natural infiltration may take too long. Then, and only if live-trapped wild stock can't be had, a good quality of pen-reared stock may hasten re-establishment—if adequate food and cover exist or can be replaced beforehand.

Pen-reared birds are sometimes good material for experiments,

and continued experimentation is one of the functions of a progressive game department. Leopold's startling discoveries about wildness in turkeys were made possible only through the use of pen-reared stock as part of his material. Then, there are some great land areas—deserts, mountains, wastelands, and others—where wild game is naturally deficient now, and where land improvement is not economically possible. Proper experimentation with developing new, adapted strains may someday put game on such lands, where it might not come in naturally, at least not for many years. Also, biologists can find out a number of things about wild game by studying the more easily observed tame counterparts—meanwhile finding out things about pen-reareds, too. All in all, pen-reared stock has a definite use in experiments.

Nevertheless, none of these uses are reason for a state game department to engage in wholesale production and release of quail or other game. The birds needed for release can be purchased more cheaply; the ones used for experiment need be raised only in small numbers; for shooting or field trials, private groups can raise the birds or purchase them most satisfactorily themselves.

Well, we've been around a lot of states and covered a lot of ground. We've gone deep into some of the new and important things, and rehashed a pile of the old, and what do we come out with? Summing it all up, it seems to add up to about this:

Wild-reared game is better fitted by nature to survive and furnish sport of the kind most sportsmen (and their dogs) prefer, than any cheaply reared, mass-produced game-farm substitute. This is because the "game" quality of wild species is developed only in the wild; pen life discourages that quality, and at once the ability of the pen-reared stuff to survive. The secret of getting more wild game is to save the "lost surplus"

produced every year by providing the extra and improved food and cover that will let this surplus live and become game. Since most game lands are private lands, no game department can scare up the kind of money, and dictate the kind of land use, needed to improve the land. But game departments can help by co-operating with all good land-improvement programs, putting in time, lending technical assistance, digging up needed information, conducting educational programs, and putting in some extra money for specific wildlife benefits.

Game departments are coming to put more and more stress on land improvement programs, and less and less on mass production of pen-reared stock. Game-farm stock is being relegated to more logical uses: to augment shooting for private clubs who have the money and inclination to do this on their own hook; as field and retriever trials material; for certain restricted public relations; and for experiments. Once these reasons and purposes are understood, thinking sportsmen, concerned for the future of their sport, will back the new thought in game management, and so insure wild, instead of tame, game for future gunning.



THE GREAT REPRISAL

IN Doug Stampers' famous Cotton Exchange Restaurant you can tell which way cotton and stock markets are headed. If they are booming, conversation buzzes and there are plenty of laughs. But if they're aboard the toboggan, the boys are hunched silently over their coffees and cokes like wet chickens huddled out of an all-day rain. It takes upping markets, biting fish or a heavy flight of ducks and geese to make Doug's place sound like a peaceful beehive gone berserk.

Many a Memphis cotton merchant in the dumps forgets his troubles on hearing that bass are hitting popping bugs in Stud Horse Bay. Just as soon as he can lie to his wife, pack some lunch, and grab his tackle box and rod case, he is gone from there right now.

Occasionally, in Doug's chophouse, a stiff cotton deal gets crabbed by some unintentional meddle of shooting or fishing business. It isn't Doug's fault; his customers bring it on themselves. Just when some dealer is fixing to turn over a fat consignment, some fellow barges over to the table and blurts out a wild-eyed story about Tommy Bradley and George Blagden

catching two limits of big bass yesterday afternoon in that cove in behind Midway Chute.

Right away the cotton trade blows higher than a cat's back. Next thing the seller knows, the kibitzer has his precious fat-turkey buyer chasing off for his outboard motor and ice jug. His only recourse then is to horn in on the trip himself in order to keep the trade alive.

Sid West once hung on like a bulldog in order to keep a whale of a sale going. Toward the fag end of the afternoon his disgusted customer and the kibitzer were both fishless. So Sid was handed the fly rod and told he had made the cotton sale if he was man enough to hook and land two five-pound big-mouths.

Spotting a pocket off the main ditch, Sid had himself eased in there and put his black-and-white bucktail about six inches behind a rim of spume scum. There was hell to pay when he hooked and horsed in a six-pound bass. He then played another hunch by trolling along a log jam. The next thing he dragged into the boat was a seven-pound blue channel catfish. Sid sure wanted that blue cat for himself, but the customer demanded both fish. Sid cried a while, but finally dried his eyes and produced his order book and fountain pen. The customer signed up, and that was that. Sid claimed it was an ill fish that blowed nobody some good.

From Stamper's restaurant to the corner of the Cotton Exchange Building there is a sort of curb market for seasonal piscatorial or shooting dope, called "Fish Information, Please." There has been a lot of talk about employing a full-time executive secretary to analyze and classify the mass of hunting and angling dope accumulating every day.

Some smart boys would make a fish-killing at, say, Whitehall Slough and then, to cover their tracks, report their amazing

catch as having been made miles away from there. That constitutes unethical practice, of course, and there's been talk of organization to investigate and blacklist those engaged in such unsportsmanlike methods. You have to be especially careful about quail- and duck-shooting rumors—to say nothing of bird dog trades, if you are in the market for a dog. You should always deal with an honest and experienced bird dog merchant like my old friend, Milton Throckner.

The weather was cool enough to work pointers and setters early of mornings or in the cool of the evening. But the cover was still too green and high to tell anything about the upcoming quail crop, except that, from their size now, many will still be too immature to gun even when the bird season opens. It is also difficult to judge dog quality or performance. Some animals are allergic to dust and pollens, just like us human hay-fever sufferers. And it is worse than tough when bird dogs root their eyes and noses full of grass seeds and foxtail barbs that pierce like porcupine needles. Not many dog owners think to roll back their dogs' eyelids and syringe with healing solutions.

Few fellows know how to condition shooting dogs, much less field-trial prospects. That's why it always pays to send a bird dog to some competent handler. Then, when your time comes to hunt, it's a pleasure to shoot over a well-conditioned animal. Most amateurs take out some kennel-fattened dog and run it into a half-blind lather. Then they drive back to town, with the setter or pointer exposed to wind or weather. I've seen several fine bird dogs carried off by pneumonia through just such ignorance—or worse, plain cussed carelessness.

Well, today I was lunching in Doug Stamper's as usual. Imminence of frost-fall called for grub that sticks to one's ribs. There I sat with Leo Carter and Leroy Cooper, and my dough is on Leo to trim and stack his cord of barbecued spareribs before

Roy's drive on the well-fortified breastwork of corned beef and cabbage gains enough ground to hold the position against counterattack. I was still wondering why guys stall off putting their bird dogs in trim before the hunting season. They come home empty-bagged and bellyaching about how their dogs played out or couldn't smell the birds, or sump'n. You'd think they'd run out of alibis. They never blame themselves. It is always the poor, innocent dogs with whom the fault is found.

That's why I was glad to see old Milton Throcker. Among other celebrities frequenting Stamper's, Milt is the greatest bird dog salesman of all time. When Milt goes all out on a bird dog sale, you glow at his oratory and realize the fearlessness of the truths he utters. He puts his merchandise right out on the counter before your very eyes. Milt should have been in the national headlines thirty years ago.

True, he was at his peak, you might say, in the good old days when quail were really plentiful and classy bird dogs a dime a dozen. That's what makes his greatness as a modern bird dog salesman all the more remarkable. Even on a declining market he has kept his art in shape through all these years. The only difference I can detect is a more mellow deftness in his handling of approach and build-up details.

After all, however, you must pay good money to deal with true art or artists, and Milt is no exception. For instance, I'll back him to peddle some snipe-nosed egg-buster with a fat, meaty tail, sight unseen, to any nationally recognized bird-dog authority. Milt would sell him while laced into a straitjacket. And in a nice, easy way, too. Like one of those gifted bankers who came up from teaching Sunday school classes and note-shaving on week days. They turned you down so deftly on a loan that you didn't know it had happened until you got out on the sidewalk.

Milton Throcker is the fellow who, some years ago, organized his great shooting dog, Brownie, into a five-man stock company and lived to see his shareholders satisfied with their sport dividends and each unaware he wasn't the sole owner of said Brownie. Why, even Washington heard about that piece of high financing and put out feelers trying to lure Milt down there on a dollar-a-year basis. But Milt sent F.D.R. word through his Congressman to tell Morgenthau he wasn't interested and to quit writing any more letters to him.

Anyway, Milt knows bird dog conditioning by heart. In summer his own animals herd the stock to pasture night and morning and follow Milt's horse around the plantation. And he just doesn't believe you can keep a bird dog in fine fettle on a diet of dishwater and persimmons.

Milt sort of hesitated before putting in his order for lunch. But he finally got himself in hand and ordered a dozen Bayou Cocque oysters. He also sent word to the chef to include three strips of crisp sow-belly. "There ain't no oyster, livin' nur daid," claims Milt, "that ain't improved by a touch o' po'k in some form ur nuther. Not floatin' aroun' in no grease," explains Milt, "but jes' enough o' the hawg along to tie the bivalve in with a po'k escort and thus complete the gustatory illusion of impeded slipperiness."

All of a sudden Milt turned on me and said, "I finally got even with that fellow."

I hadn't the faintest idea what fellow he was talking about, but I knew it must have something to do with a bird dog deal: so I asked, "What fellow?"

While Roy and Leo, figuring something was in the wind, ordered dessert and settled down to listen, Milt launched his tale.

"I get acquainted with an elderly gentleman, a doctor named

Samples, down in the Randolph Buildin'. He tells me he's got a 2,400-acre farm over in Arkansas and would like to sell it if he could git his price. Sounds like a high-class property to hear him tell it, and, as I buy a lot of cotton all through the same county his place is in, I ease by and take a peep at it. Fine black sandy loam, good home place and fences, and bang-up tenant houses.

"The old doctor says he'll pay full commission on the sale, and that would mean a fat pick-up for me. So do I do some broadcasting! One night I'm out on a party when I meet up with a nice young chap named Pettigrew. We get to talkin' quail huntin' and dawgs. He claims he's got one o' the best young pointers in captivity, and I tell him maybe so, but in such case he is only in a tie with my dawg. You know what I think o' my Tarrant dawg! We arrange a bird hunt down in Mississippi and, sho' nuff, Pettigrew's got a real high-steppin' pottige hound—an upstandin' young pointer—and he give Tarrant a hard race. His dawg is registered, same as Tarrant."

There was no use in asking the Pettigrew dog's breeding—Milt wouldn't know. But if it had been a dog he had for sale and you asked its pedigree, he would have answered right off the bat: "Alpine Lad, or Tribulation stock." All Milt's for-sale dogs stem from those two common ancestors. Milt just doesn't know or use any other sires or forebears. Alpine Lad and Trib are good enough for him.

"Well," he rattled on, "I get to likin' this young Pettigrew, and befo' long he mentions he's picked up a thick batch of coarse bank notes playin' the stock market and would invest it in a plantation if he could find the right place cheap. He also wants to start a field trial string of pointers. So, quick as a flash, I tip him off to the farm ol' Doc Samples owns over in Arkansas.

I describe it fully and he smiles and says it sounds jes' like the outfit he has in mind and says he'll go look it over with me.

"I know a feller not far from there who has a lot of quail on his place; so I suggest to Pettigrew that we take his dog and Tarrant along and hunt when we've finished inspectin' the Samples land. He seems mighty pleased with the farm and asks the price. I tell him Doc wants seventy-five bucks an acre on a walkout basis. I suggest stoppin' at the farm commissary to get some crackers and cheese for lunch, but he prefers drivin' on to a small town and eatin' in a restaurant.

"That afternoon we each bagged a limit of quail on my friend's place, and my dawg Tarrant had another hard time barely shadin' Pettigrew's young pointer. I told him his dawg would be hard to beat another season. He says he wouldn't take five hundred dollars for Snap right now. I says I don't blame you, nur me neither."

Milt pinned a sliver of crisp side-meat to half an oyster and munched reflectively. I'd like to see Milt with five hundred bucks laid on the keghead for any dog—Tarrant included.

"I'd taken a likin' to Pettigrew; so in order to hurry up the deal I tell him Doc is payin' me a commission and if it'll help any I'll split it with him. He seems most appreciative; so next week we make another hunt with a friend o' mine in the next county. I ride him around the Samples place agin and buy him a two-dollar sirloin and trimmin's when we git home that night. That dawg o' his improves ev'y time we hunt him, and I'm beginnin' to wonder jus' how big a price he would fetch.

"We made several mo' hunts, and Pettigrew looked over the Samples place right along. Ask me didn't I think it could be bought cheaper. I tol' him there warn't but one way to find that out: to hand the ol' Doc a signed firm offer and see what he'd do.

"One night me and Pettigrew was settin' over a pair of three-buck sirloins in the Four Star Inn when all of a sudden he says: 'Milt, you sho' have been nice tryin' to sell me the Samples place and givin' me all this fine bird shootin'. But,' he says, 'it's such a good one on you that I ain't had the nerve to break the sad news.' 'How is that?' I ask, thinkin', of course, that he was fixin' to kid me 'bout my beatin' him shootin' all the time."

Roy and Leo sat there stirring their javas and waiting for the blow-off.

"Well,' says Pettigrew, sort of drawin' a long breath, 'you see, when you offered me the Samples property, I jes' didn't have the face to tell you that ol' Doc Samples is my stepfather and that he has left me and Mamma the Criss-Cross plantation in his will—or its equivalent if he sells it. You've been tryin' to sell me my own farm, much less the commission you was willin' to split. But I figured you'd appreciate the joke as much as I have and because we've sho' had some fine shootin' over Snap and Tarrant.'

"I damn near choked on the piece of steak in my mouth, and calculated jes' what his joke had cost me in time and gas and oil and all the good dough I'd spent entertainin' him. And worse still, every time we went huntin', I'd give him all the birds, too." Milt all but wept at the memory.

"But it warn't no good gittin' mad, because I sort of suspected that if ever the time come when he got unlucky in the stock market, they might have to peddle the farm anyhow. So, I laughed long and loud right on with him. I says to myself, I says: 'Some day, brother, you will pay me off big for such doin's.'

"I seen Pettigrew a lot last summer and always asked him about his dawg Snap and the Samples farm. He said it damn near tickled ol' Doc Samples to death how I'd tried to sell the

place to its owner. But deep down it sure rankled with me. I could see Pettigrew settin' there chewin' on them tender three-buck steaks and hollerin' for the waiter to move fast with more cold suds."

Having finished his grub, but not his tale, Milt put in an order for a cut of sweet-potato pie and black coffee.

"Last fall, when bird season opened, me and Bill Robinson made a hunt down in DeSoto County, Mississippi. My ol' Tarrant dog sho' put on a race that day—they couldn't no dawg of beaten him. Whilst we were drivin' home that evenin' I was sayin' to Billy that I hadn't never seen but one dog in my life I thought could hold a candle to Tarrant excep' the Snap dawg belongin' to young Pettigrew.

"Well, sir, we was comin' along a narrow dirt road this side of a little pea-peck town called Punk Point, and there was another car runnin' 'bout a hundred yards ahead of us. All of a sudden we seen what looked like a bird dawg jump from the weeds 'longside the road and land almost in front of the other car's lights. The driver swerved, but the fender hit the dawg kind o' sideways and throwed it back over the tops o' the bushes.

"It was all done quick as a flash. The driver figgered he'd done killed somebody's dawg; so he stepped on the gas plenty. Billy and me stopped, got out and went down in a shallow ditch. There laid the po' dawg, breathin' heavy, but alive and slowly comin' to. Billy brought his huntin' cup full o' water, and we bathed the dawg's face and a slight cut on his back left leg. There warn't no bones busted, but the dawg's tail was, and that's mighty painful.

"I turned my flashlight on the dawg's collar, and, bless goodness, if the name-plate don't read 'C. T. Pettigrew, Memphis, Tenn.' Then I did look sharp and, by golly ding, if it warn't

Snap! I called him by name and petted him, and befo' long he was on his feet. Suddenly I realized that here was my chance to git even with Pettigrew. I never opened my head to Billy, 'cause I know he was expectin' me to go fifty-fifty with him on the dawg if he turned out any good. We put Snap in the car and hustled him to the best veterinary in town. He says Snap's tail is broke so bad he'll have to amputate. That fitted right into my plans for the future."

Milt stoked a generous paring of sweet-potato pie and smacked his lips.

"After I got the Snap dawg out o' the hospital I'm sure he remembered me and Tarrant from the previous huntin' season. Course, I took Pettigrew's collar off Snap the night me and Billy seen him knocked in the ditch. After thinkin' it all over, I decided to put Bill Robinson wise to the whole business. When Snap's tail healed up and he was ready to run, I took him on down to my plantation and begin huntin' him reg'lar with Tarrant. But I knew I'd have to change him up still mo' than that busted-off tail so Pettigrew wouldn't know him.

"I tried some drug-store dye on his hair in spots, but I couldn't quite match the shade—a deep liver—and when it rained or Snap swum a creek the color sort o' run. Finally I asked our ol' colored cook, Aunt Sally, if she knowed any yarb-doctor could turn out fast dyes along with his charms and jack-balls. She says: 'Dey's an ol' nigger down in de Pigeon Roost bottoms whut dyes and colors and straightens hair and bleaches skins fum plumb black to gingercake ur almost white.' Aunt Sally said, 'Couldn't Brer Simonson change dat dawg's color, he'd just die hisse'f.'

"So I took Snap to Brer Simonson's cabin, and it took him half a day to put an extra liver spot on each of his sides. You couldn't tell 'em from the natural hair to save yo' life. I asked

Brer Simonson what was in his dyes, and he said clays from the earth, stain from the walnut and other vegetables, and frawg oil."

Milt stirred his coffee.

"The mo' I hunted Snap all durin' Christmas week and early January, the mo' I realized that I'd done finally got holt of a dawg could pour it on Tarrant. Not over-noticeably, but he whupped Tarrant oftener 'n Tarrant licked him. Looked like ev'y time I hunted him, Snap kept ramblin' wider and wider, puttin' mo' punch into his runnin', handlin' surer, and standin' up to his birds like a stone wall. And was that dawg stylish!

"Billy Robinson and me seen Pettigrew's ads in the papers offerin' a hundred dollars' reward just for information regardin' the dawg's whereabouts. But we laid low. I even met Pettigrew and he told me 'bout how he lost Snap. He says, 'Me and another feller was huntin' afoot and didn't have no business doin' it on account of you cain't keep up with no such big-runnin' dawg lest you're horseback.' Snap got lost in strange country and must o' been huntin' for Pettigrew when he come up out o' that ditch and the car struck 'im.

"Pettigrew said some feller called him up and said he thought he remembered hittin' a bird dawg, but it was done so quick he couldn't rightly remember much about it. Pettigrew says, 'I wouldn't take a thousand bucks for that dawg, even if I knowed he was a cripple for life.'"

LeRoy Cooper remarked that such a viewpoint was very sportin' on Mr. Pettigrew's part.

"I had done made up my mind to enter Snap in the shootin' dawg stake at the Memphis Field Trial Club's meetin' and see to it that Pettigrew was on hand to watch his own dawg run without knowin' it. So I tol' him 'bout a fine new dawg I'd raised, one of Tarrant's pups out of a King Genius bitch. I said

it was without doubt the classiest shooting dawg anybody ever popped a gun over and jes' the type I figgered Pettigrew ought to buy after it won the Hernando stake.

"Pettigrew was right there, too, when the thing started—all dressed up in ridin' britches and shiny boots and a loud coat like one o' these here ads in the magazines. Me and Snap was drawed second brace the openin' mawnin' to run on the birdy second course. I warmed Snap up befo' the start and fed him a little fresh beef and a couple o' eggs. He was sho' fit and rearin' to travel! When Pettigrew seen Snap, his eyes bugged out and he says, 'Gosh, he sho' resembles my ol' Snap dawg, don't he?' He sorter run his hand along Snap's flanks and Snap knowed him, all right. But them two extra spots did the business. They was holdin' color tighter 'n a sinner swingin' onto a baptizin' life line.

"Yes, sir," Pettigrew says, 'excep' for that short tail and them extra spots, he is ol' Snap to the life.'

"Snap was down with Neely Grant's classy bitch Katydid-kate, and a darn swell bird-finder she was, too. It didn't take but a few minutes to see that a real dawg race was goin' on. They went big and cut up their countries nicely. Pretty soon ol' Snap reached out bigger 'n bigger, and the first thing anybody knowed yonder he was on point. And did he really nail them pottiges! Looked like a million dollars with that stub tail stickin' straight up, and never budged when I shot the gun.

"Then Neely's bitch found, but she was just a bit unsteady to the pistol. And, boy, was Snap handlin' like a glove! Katie run good, but Snap was outside of her mostly. Snap found five beves in the hour, and Katie four, and they both finished strong. Neely says to me, 'Milt, yo' dawg has shaded mine, but they have both set them others some hard copy to shoot at.'

"The judges placed Snap winner and Katie second when the

thing was all over. I had called Snap 'Jim' all durin' the race, but that didn't make no difference. All you had to do with that dawg was to wave yo' hat and give him the beam, and he'd stay on it and use his bird sense.

"Pettigrew was all excited and the first to congratulate me. He wants to know what I'll take for the dog; says Jim reminds him so much of ol' Snap he'd like the best in the world to own him. I took the big lovin' cup on home with me and fed Snap till he quit eatin' of his own accord—which is very unusual for him. But I had discouraged Pettigrew on sellin' the dog.

"A few days later I meet up with Pettigrew downtown, and he comes right after me again, tryin' to buy Jim. I says, 'Aw, man, I ain't had time yet to have that lovin' cup engraved; and besides, yours is 'bout the tenth offer I've done had on the dawg, anyhow' I says: 'Why, Homer Jones is crazy for him, and so is Johnny Dupre and Ches Harris and Clyde Norton and Dewey English, and all them top handlers have done heard about the dawg and are worryin' me to death wirin' me 'bout breedin' to him. But,' I says, 'I wouldn't sell on no condition unless the purchaser agreed to let me direct the dog's breedin' and general field trial management. I'd want him sent to the prairies this comin' summer. You know,' I says, 'there was a lot of talk at Hernando that I had done slipped in a ringer on the boys and that Jim didn't have no business in any shootin' dawg stake—he belonged up on the big circuit time.'"

Milt actually swelled with righteous indignation at the very memory. He swigged some coffee and took good hold on himself. He was nearing the pay-off.

"Pettigrew says: 'I want that dawg, Throckner, and you can write yo' own ticket on all them counts. I'll give a cool thousand bucks for the dawg jes' like I said I would, down at Hernando.' I says, 'Come on in the Merchants and State Bank,

then, and let's see where we stand.' I took a pen and wrote out a bill o' sale on the back of a blank check. It says: 'Received of C. T. Pettigrew one thousand dollars cash in hand and acknowledged for one liver-and-white pointer dog called Jim, but said dog is subject to registration and title believed good. Purchaser agrees that Milton Throcker shall direct future breedings and all handling and field trial contacts of the dog.'

"Pettigrew read it over and says, 'That's okay by me.' He does business with this bank and goes over to the teller's window and comes back with ten one-hundred-dollar bills. I puts 'em in my wallet, and then asks Pettigrew if he wants me to keep the dawg. He says that is satisfactory to him, but he would like to see a piece in the paper that he has bought the recent winner at Hernando, so that everybody'll know he now owns a field trial headliner."

Here Milt's eyes began to glitter.

Then I says, slow and cool like, 'Whenever you want to see Snap, why come on by my plantation and play with him.' He says, 'Snap? You mean Jim.' 'Naw,' I says, 'I mean Snap!' Pettigrew's face got white and he whispers, 'What do you mean, Snap?' I says, 'Listen, Pettigrew, you thought you pulled a fast one on me when you let me spend a wad of time and dough on you whilst I was tryin' to sell you yo' own farm, didn't you? You got a great kick out of it, didn't you? Well, maybe you'll git a still bigger kick buyin' yo' own dawg back—how 'bout it?'

"Pettigrew says, 'You're kiddin' me. That dawg ain't Snap.' I pulled Snap's collar out o' my pocket and handed it to him. 'Where do you suppose I got that?' I says. He read his name on the plate and damn near fainted. So then I tol' him jes' how it all happened. I says, 'You can't take it to court, Pettigrew, because you ain't got no case, and besides you got too much sense to open yo' mouth. And besides, my friend Bill Robinson

heard you say you'd give a thousand bucks for that dawg Snap jes' to git him back, even if you knowed he was crippled for life.'

"Pettigrew had done got all sobered up, and the tears came to his eyes. He says, 'That's right, Milt, you really saved ol' Snap's life. If I'd got him back, he would still be jes' Snap. But you took him and developed him into a great field trial winner.' I says: 'I ain't had no name engraved on that lovin'-cup. I been waitin' to have C. T. Pettigrew's put there.'

'Pettigrew never said another word. He jes' walked over to the teller's cage again, come back, and handed me another five hundred bucks. He says, 'Here's a bonus for bein' the smoothest son-of-a-sea-cook in seven states, and I'll buy all the thick steaks from here out whenever we hunt behin' Snap and Tarrant.'"





A CERTAIN RICH MAN

OF a frosty December Sunday evening, Hal and I, en route to our distant duck club, have supped in an up-and-coming electric-light and Chamber-of-Commerce town and decide to attend divine worship. Which, a couple of backsliding old wildfowlers may add without irreverence, their respective souls could do with, aplenty. So we hunt up the Episcopal edifice and are convoyed down the middle aisle to what two hard-bitten ex-leg men accept as ringside or press-box Annie Oakleys.

For that matter, Hal has for long contended, even to the Bishop himself, that our churches may be overlooking a good public-relations lesson from our overly fussed-over youth movement—in failing to develop slick trainees and junior pin-ups as usherettes, instead of the old-line, dour-faced greeters with funeral pace, downcast eyes, and limp flippers. He says he doesn't mean to jazz up religion exactly, far from it; just freshen things up a bit and keep us from feeling too sorry for ourselves

while trying to maintain our dignities and senses of humor intact.

With the backs of our "furriners'" necks cooling off a bit as exhibits, we pluck up courage to peek around a bit ourselves. Hal whispers, along the lines of his usherettes idea, that our crowd seems to have more than its quota of comely local wrens, when all at once he does an extra gander around a dowager's sombrero and says remind him to tell me about an old fellow he spots sitting front-and-center across the aisle.

"He's young Buck Willmarr's father-in-law," whispers Hal, "you know young Buck?"

"Sure, went to college with and played football with his Dad—we were frat brothers—a grand guy." The dowager cuts an annoyed glance across her minked shoulder, so we shush. I take a better close-up of the old ramrod Hal mentions. His face is a sea of dry-iced wrinkles, amid which kindness and good nature seem as lost as Little Bo-Peep's baa-baas.

I forget to buzz Hal about the story, because, after service, he runs into another buddy for so and we have quite a distance to drive anyway. In fact, it is well around noon next day and we are boiling the battered tea bucket to wash down our barbecued pork sandwiches with slaw and hot sauce, before I remember. It has a beautiful morning's altogether satisfactory wild-fowling; for in order to prolong a gorgeous stretch in the marsh (which same are running out all too swiftly in both our lives), we have passed up innumerable chances to finish our limits in order to film duck movies. Many mallard clusters have traded in and out of adjacent pin-oak flats or flown taller timber along Bayou Lagrue; to settle in or hover around our decoys with nothing taken but their pictures.

With a generous legal number of waterfowl to sack, Hal and I are not in sympathy with a sometimes overemphasized gunning modus operandi given to mopping up duck meat by first

calling down and lighting flocks and then spraying them with the heavy ack-ack "settin'-an'-flyin'," as old colored Horace used to shake his head over and tsk-tsk. We prefer "hittin'-or-missin'" over the treetops, or when the birds leap from bayou willows or buckbrushed backwaters.

Sitting on a log with our guns handy, I suddenly hear myself humming a long-forgotten air and words coming from nowhere; a popular sentimental ballad of the late Charles K. Harris song-writing era. Maybe Hal's mentioning Buck Willmarr's name—and his kid's—and wanting me to remind him something about the old chap at service last night—pulls music from lost years? Or maybe the church service planted an association of the melody and old Buck in my subconscious. Duck shooting's meditations are an odd jumble of musings, any way you figure 'em. So maybe the Lord is just putting me and Buck in touch again. I don't even recall the warble's title, but our Fraternity House Glee Gang used to murder that tune out on the piazza, spring evenings after dress parade. How it all comes back.

Spacious lawns along Faculty Row are masses of white and pink blossomings heavy with the scent of locust languor. Flower beds bow and scrape with nodding whorls of yellow, crimson, and royal purple. Vernal happiness seems to have freshly rainwashed the whole world. But I realize now that such a sheen merely tricks the eyes of youth—blindly in love—with life. I can call up many a face from that group of youngsters on the piazza. A log out in the swamp-forest, with the sun bright about one and a gun slanted across one's lap, isn't the worst place in the world in which to remember? And sometimes, if you do it deeply enough, the sun may mist a bit?

Old Buck Willmarr's long, strong, brown fingers dreamily orchestrate and as quickly mute the strings of his huge, concert guitar. Booth McKinney's magnificent bass rumbles, and

Tommy Tate's lovely tenor soars until it trues richly on lingering, barber-shop fade-outs. Groups of co-eds and uniformed cadets to-and-fro through warm, swiftly enveloping dusks, impatient for summer's darkness so befriending all candidates for young love's happiest degree. But even meditation must yield when, from out of a clear sky, a swarm of mallards flutters into one's puddle.

Putting those delicately winnowing shapes on film is like squinting into an old-fashioned kaleidoscope. But instead of multicolored glass brilliancies tumbling into swiftly changing combinations, you realize that everything beyond your lens is, in truth, nature's most vivid assortments, assuming—faster than eye or brain, unless aided by science, can even follow—postures that will never be exactly reshaped or recorded. Only half frightened after a moment's water pause, they take wing again, to be followed into nowhere by the camera's magic eye. And all the while, that old song is still percolating. I can hear Tommy Tate packing the air—just as plain. The subconscious is still working, even though by now we have switched from camera to guns, for a string of fowl is working toward us—low—from the bayou timber.

Be that as it may, however, I'm remembering, the while, that ~~the~~ Buck Willmarr and Tommy Tate and others of that bunch gave their lives breaking the first Hindenburg line. And now, loin fruit from others of the outfit have joined them as of St. Lô, Bastogne, and Iwo Jima. Somewhere in this hell's brawl Buck Willmarr's boy heads a hospital unit under fire since North Africa. A bunch of meddling sprigs swoops alongside the swarm of mallards approaching us and veers them into a lead-off wind glide. You see that happen more often than you'd believe, and the hard part about it is, there's mighty little you

can do about it. It comes to me to remind Hal about the old guy in church.

Hal pushes the tea bucket closer to the coals of our little fire, and grins. "Oh, yes," he says, "about old—" Just then a trio of mallards swings over those three high, leaning gums across the bayou between our blind on Jack's Elbow and the mouth of Lost Island Creek. Hal does some extra-loud begging on his long-range Tom Turpin duck call and finally outtalks those three drakes into giving us some of their business. They are plenty low their second circle. Two fall on land, but the third fellow towers into clean ceiling before getting centered. He tumbles into Lagrue's swift current but will hang up on those viney tangles that stymie the S-curve below Jack's Elbow.

Retrieving our victims, Hal rejoins me and suggests a last cup of tea. "We have about ten to boat," he says, "so what about cruising up the bayou a while? We'll see what's doing around the head of Jennings's Slough; there hasn't been a shot fired from thataway all morning. Then we'll jump-shoot all the way downstream to Dam One. We ought to finish out handily; how does that program listen to you, my fine lout?" It suits me to a tee-Y-dee, so we reheat the Lipton's and Hal rummages two clips of palpably shopworn cookies from his rucksack.

"That guy in church last night," he resumes, "is old man Wilt Leeton—uummpphh—huumppph—young Buck Willmarr's daddy-in-law."

"The hell you say," I exclaim, recognizing the name of the multimillionaire whose swollen fortune is built on general farm and household nostrums and other variegated enterprises to which he puts his Midas touch. That "multi" they almost invariably slap in front of any alleged fortune in such figures is often phony. But in Leeton's case it is the McCoy. Otherwise, it's the same way they bandy around the title "All-American,"

these days. After some egg acquires his first million, which nowadays ain't so difficult if you know the right politicians or don't get caught but just merely suspected, the "multi" clings. Like when some hick sports editor, meaning well of course, publishes his rag's "All-American." He picks, at tackle, the local stalwart who darn near died in every game for dear old Calumet. After that "Two-Man" Chester is "All-American" for life, regardless of whether Grant Rice and his All-American board of strategy ever heard of "Two-Man."

Hal says—"I have known Wilt Leeton ever since he run a plantation commissary with side lines in drugs, fancy groceries, and funeral supplies; including mortician services with no color lines drawn." When Hal and I converse, out hunting, we use language or rather grammar we wouldn't around home or in front of company. But we understand each other better when talking our native lingo.

"Wilt had a correspondence-school pharmacist's degree," Hal continues, "and was always concocting homemade prescriptions and remedies for man or beast. He made a specialty of and bragged about curing folks with one or sometimes both feet in the grave. So it won't hurt him none at his age bein' in church last night." A bunch of teal whipped down the bayou and whisked around Jack's Elbow so fast that neither of us could grab for our guns. "Could I of banked around some of life's turns like those birds," laughs Hal, "I could of skipped a lot of grief in my time."

"Well," he keeps on, "I used to sell Wilt farm implements before I got into the newspaper game; we both sort of coming up. When he got through clamoring for additional and fictitious discounts, you were too worn out and weak to bawl out a refusal. I have taken shipment losses on cancellations out of my own pocket on him, rather than waste breath in rebuttal with

my sales manager. Wilt was so tight he wouldn't of give a dime to see the Statue of Liberty do a Gypsy Rose Lee strip tease. People in those parts used to claim it cost a dollar to shake hands with him. There was a standin' reward for anyone ever seein' him smile." Hal woofs in frustrated disgust, and returns to his castigation of Wilt Leeton.

"He liked to hunt but always went by himself or with someone he wouldn't have to let shoot, so he could kill both limits and double the meat. When opportunity presented, he'd violate any game law and poach folks' lands. And did he like to get hold of a mortgage where the poor pea-peck had a top bird-dog he could steal at ten cents on the dollar and then make the tenant quit shootin'!" By this time we have washed the tea bucket and cups, heaved drip water out of the boat, and tidied cargo. Hal sits up front and I paddle the blaze marks. It is easy traveling up-current. The bayou is flooding, and I use open spaces along its spreads so as to utilize still water and better cover.

We can't talk to amount to anything because Hal is all tightened up and ready to let fly at anything that flutters out of the thick spots. We can hear and see scads of ducks, mostly mallards, selling out of flooded flats on either side of us. But they veer wide and cross out too far ahead, bound for Jennings. We get two nice rises, however, between Jack's Elbow and what Johnny King calls his "Hot Spot."

Hal boats four mallards with two neat doubles at the mouth of Wilkes bayou's upper bend. Three drakes and a hen. I can tell from glancing at our bag that we are long on drakes; although, in a day's shooting, the average is about fifty-fifty. The mouth of Jennings's Slough is a great flight-shooting location. When the water highs it leaves a tiny island in the middle of a lumbered spread grown up in weed and willow clumps.

And do the mallards funnel in there! We land on the knob and sit around a spell while Hal checks farther into Wilt Leeton's life story.

"Yes, sir, the years slip along and Wilt and I drift apart. The rich get richer and us poor get poorer. Wilt moves to a bigger city, organizes half a dozen companies and manufacturing combines. The next time I run into Wilt he has acquired unbelievable polish. But the dope is, he is still too tight for even arthritis of the joints and is so slick he makes his own grease. He brags to me about his field trial dogs and quail preserves. But I notice I never judge any of his pointers or setters on the circuits; and he sure don't invite me to join him in any shooting.

"They tell me he still hunts largely alone, and hasn't been able to crash any of the better duck clubs. Maybe they don't want him on his general rep, or maybe he's just too chinchy. He has no sons. Just one lovely daughter with all her fine mother's good sense, charm, and beauty. The child's name is Linda and she rates tops with everyone." Hal eyes several bursts of gadwall and pintails within easy range, but claims he is interested now in only one mallard drake. That item plugged, he says we will change places in the boat and drift on down the bayou.

"To show you how close Wilt Leeton played 'em to his chest," says Hal, reminding me at the same time to watch my way for the lone-ranger mallard while he keeps his peepers peeled in the other direction, "he hurts his leg someway, and after his local chiropractor fools with it a while and can't help him, he gets scared and decides to go to the big city and have the famous Troyer Bone Clinic work on him. But he mortally hates to put out what he has heard the clinic charges rich folks like himself.

"So, saying nothing to anyone, much less the wife and daugh-

ter who would have been thoroughly ashamed of him, he plans an ostensible three-weeks business trip up the country. Then, equipped with a stained work shirt, rusty overalls, and ditch-digger's muddy brogans, he drives five hundred miles to the clinic city. Registers overnight under an assumed name at a cheap walk-up. Goes to the clinic next morning with a rubber-banded roll of dirty one- and five-dollar bills. Tells the desk he's a poor W.P.A. worker who wants to get well so bad but can't afford much—if anything. Won't they please help him? He gives his address at the walk-up in case they check on him. And, brother, he gets away with it—clean.

“After ten days' treatment he is okay and discharged at a cost to him of only thirty bucks for probably five hundred dollars' worth of therapy, braces, photographs, grub, and room rent. He digs it up painfully and goes away mumbling thanks. While he is at the clinic, young Dr. Buck Willmarr takes a sort of personal interest in the poor W.P.A. worker because one day they get to talking and find they have a kindred interest in bird dogs and quail shooting. Two summers later, young Buck Willmarr is playing in an invitation golf tournament in Wilt Leeton's home town and gets invited to a cocktail party at the Leeton estate. Naturally he meets the lovely Linda. You can feel the plot fattening?” A pair of teal zip overhead but Hal merely tips his hat to their shadows and wishes them good morrow.

“Young Buck Willmarr and Linda Leeton fall for each other good and hard; so ere long Doc is being seen around Wilt's household with recurring frequency. Somehow he keeps studying old Wilt's puss with a disturbingly vague sense of having seen it somewhere. Maybe it's the bird-dog subconscious, or just his noticing that Leeton is always sort of ill at ease around him. Wilt has no objection to Linda's marrying a grand boy like

young Buck. But his guilty conscience in the W.P.A.-clinic matter gnaws on him and makes him keep himself as much as possible in the background." A pair of extremely tall mallards shy the island and Hal, after a second or two of fatal indecision, gives them a couple of bangs. "I should of stood at home," he says.

"The fall before the wedding, Wilt slips off on a shooting trip to the northwest, taking along only his colored chauffeur so he can take out a nonresident hunting license for him and then shoot double limits and fetch home more birds. What Wilt loved most was meat." Hal's eyes show he spots another customer, and sure enough, overhead sails that long-awaited mallard drake. This time Hal puts him right square in the middle of his Magnum's pattern and has to dodge spray when the bird crashes just off the island. He swings the boat around and tells me to down five mallards from here out—if I can. We won't jump much, if anything, until we repass Jack's Elbow. So Hal resumes his passing-parade on Wilt Leeton.

"Because he is puzzled and keeps putting two and two together, young Buck Willmarr does some adroit family questioning without arousing suspicion and double-checks the fact that Wilt did have a game leg about the time that poor W.P.A. guy was in the clinic. But he keeps it to himself and goes off shooting with some buddies. They find themselves, in a sort of surprise party, at the same hotel housing Leeton in North Dakota. One night, coming in from a hunt, Wilt's chauffeur wrecks his car during a blinding rainstorm and both men are severely injured." Hal grabs a bush, holds on and listens attentively. "There's a tremendous raft of ducks wadded up over yonder back of Wilkes," he whispers, "I can hear 'em rollin'."

"Doc Willmarr takes personal charge of the cases, cuts short his vacation, arranges hospitalization, operates, and, when they

can travel, has them flown home. During convalescence—and incidentally, the wedding has to be postponed—Wilt Leeton gets religion, or sump'n. He calls young Buck into his room one night and confesses what a lying old Scrooge he has been. Tells about the clinic evasion and a lot of other short transactions. Young Buck lets him finish and then quietly makes out that it is all news to him and tells Wilt to forget it. I guess you and I and young Buck Willmarr and one other person are the only folks that know about that episode."

"Who is the fourth?"

"Young Buck's mother. You see, I was old Buck's best man. Isabel, his wife, was, as you know, a co-ed where Buck studied for his master's degree. Her boy and Linda Leeton have had a wonderful life together. Just think what he's given up to head that hospital unit. And there's more like him. I'm sure prayin' he comes home to Linda and their two youngsters."

We skim along outside of Johnny King's "Hot-Spot," but no ducks have put down there since we passed. We circle our hide on Jack's Elbow and swing past the mouth of Lost Island Creek. The shallows east of it erupt ducks. Mallards, gadwall, sprigs, and widgeon all messed up in a getaway through matted timbertops. One lone drake splits off, climbs higher over the woods, and I scratch him down into thick bramble—float sixty yards inland.

Hal shoves like mad, but it takes some precarious wading before I catch sight of Mr. Greenhead sneaking up the shore line. A load of eights stops him. At normal ranges, eights will beat big shot all hollow for puckering crips. Hal reminds me that four more mallards must be forthcoming between here and the landing. "I must stress the fact," he says, "that I shot *my* limit, regardless, perhaps, of your claims or views to the contrary."

"Well," he resumes, speaking low, "after young Buck and Linda marry, Wilt Leeton becomes a changed man overnight. Some folks think he's gone nuts. From a hard-boiled, tricky, selfish old buccaneer, he thaws and mellows; even the expression on his face tries to change. Joined his wife's church, got baptized and confirmed, became active in civic affairs, and gave funds and lands for libraries and hospitals. Quit his game-hog ways—cold. He probably gives more toward the conservation of wild-life resources than any man in the state. People still wonder how come. But he's on the beam a long while now, and they're beginning to give him credit for a complete cure."

Our cypress boat is heavy and safe, but well shaped, and we are slipping along the current mighty fast—halfway to the mouth of Cooks Bayou before we know it. Hal says he keeps hearing ducks working and talking across that ridge of overflowed cane and sedge between Lagrue and the back-up off Cooks. "We might land here, he whispers, "ease across the neck in a sort of pincers movement, and right quick grab off those four birds we need—I think we can both get a whack." I tell him that won't do because he has already bragged about having shot his limit, so what? "You are as tight as old Wilt Leeton was," he sneers. It sort of drenches him and he is inclined to huff a bit.

We both know a place on ahead where the water has shoved over a broad, shallow pocket to the bayou's right going our way. We coast while he reminds me hissingly that in case nothing flushes we'll have to paddle all the way through Cook's to hem in those talkative ducks we're passing up. He steers cautiously, and with the silence and accuracy of forty years' experience on such details. The afternoon's half-margined sun is extraordinarily brilliant, but all in our favor. A fillip of breeze keeps water and bushes afflicker with constantly shifting lights

and shadows. Hal gives two low, warning clucks—meaning “mark right.” But I have already spotted them.

The flooded cove off which the current obliques is about an acre of knee-deep mallard’heaven checkerboarded in nut grass and button willows. I can see them working the sunlit clearings and dipping for the feed like an ant army organizing to invest a spilled sugar bowl. They are utterly unsuspicious of our gliding waylay. The boat checks suddenly and Hal slews it around a bit to shift me into just the right firing angle. We have hunted together so many years each knows the other’s fancy. The ambush is ready. Hal raps sharply on the boat with his paddle. My eyes surface the undergrowth.

Fifty, a hundred brown and green heads snap into bright-eyed alert. Tingling suspense and a thunderous roar. Caught at bushtops by the breeze, the mass of baffled fowl all but stands still while getting air-borne. The bayou is their only escape corridor. Our world is suddenly bursting with jumbled colors and raucous with wing-whiffings and outcries. Someone has smashed that old-fashioned kaleidoscope with a hammer. The big gun swings along under a rim of white bellies and semi-dangling orange webs. It opens daylight ahead of a big green-head just closing an opening in the dense column. *W-b-a-m-m!* Falling shapes fill the air. The second tube holds fire. Twenty feet overhead opens an umbrella of swerving mallards. “Great Kingdom-come,” gasps Hal, “if this paddle were only a little longer.”

We haven’t the faintest idea how many are down and are troubled. “It’s a good thing you had sense enough to not unlimber that cannon in another blast,” says Hal, “or you would have brought the law upon us—in fact I am not so sure yet.” Downstream, the water is splashed with kicking shapes. Hal rakes two drakes boatside, and after much shoving retrieves

two hens. "Well," he says, "you are a lucky stiff; I guess you'll be telling me you planned it that way?" A bit of paddling and we sight Dam One and the landing. And there sits Eddie, our property guardian.

"I have been working on Dam Three's spillway," he says, "and ducks have been piling up in Penny's Pocket all day. If I can borrow a few shells from you gentlemen I can save a lot of red points at my house." The deal is arranged, and Hal and I, with Eddie an already fading figure in the distance, begin duck-strapping our birds for the final heave-ho to the distant car. "Tomorrow morning," says Hal, "we will stop off where we heard all those ducks gossiping back of Cook's, and walk into that slough with a sack of decoys. There should be standing room only and we will put them to the sword." We shoulder our burdens gruntingly. "Hal," I ask, "have old Wilt Leeton and young Buck Willmarr gotten along all right?"

"Wonderfully," replies Hal, "but what still puzzles me is what actually changed Wilt over. Maybe he did tell his fine wife and she brought it about; nobody ever accused Wilt of not being a good husband and father. Maybe the prospect of his child's happiness with that fine boy did it. Maybe, when he got hurt in North Dakota, Wilt figured he was on his way out and decided to come clean. Or maybe he just got tired of living with himself and decided to turn over a new leaf and quit being such a heel. Anyway, all that was good in him came to the surface, and I'm willing to say for him he's done a pretty swell job. Nowadays he sort of waits to be asked to go shooting. Guess he's still ashamed of his old ways and ain't certain folks want him."

We hoof it along the winding, leafy woods-road through winter-struck forest. Our light, spruce paddles make perfect alpenstocks; real safeguards when we're tired and likely to

stumble over the least little thing in slick footing. A fox squirrel darts from the tangle ahead and scampers down the open before cutting across and leaping onto a powerful oak. "He knows his address," says Hal, "and I guess all these wild creatures are getting a break with no housing problems, rent racketeers, and alphabetical bleeding hearts to muddy the water for them."

Our duck straps aren't getting any lighter, but we plod along and pretty soon ford Horn Bayou and raise sun glare off the distant prairie. It is a relief to swing our burdens into the luggage holder and pile our guns and rucksacks on top of them. Hal breaks out two cold cokes, paper cups, and his cigarette. "We will drink this," he says, "to the reformation of a certain rich man—old Wilt Leeton—and may there be more like him to turn out as well."

"And before that toast dies out," I say, "we'll drink another to old and young Buck Willmarr—and Linda and the kids—maybe we're getting sentimental in our old ages." Subconsciously, however, I can still see old Buck's long, strong brown fingers orchestrating his concert guitar and hear Tommy Tate's tenor packing the air of that song about the girl and her baby outside the country church.

Late afternoon sun has the prairie and weed fields overhung with a dull, golden-brown vapor through which the black stripe of Bayou Lagrue's forested windings is outlined all the more vividly. And suddenly, as far as our eyes can reach, those bottomlands begin spouting thousands of ducks. Bands taking off to night-feed in the ricelands. Countless thousands of wild-fowl; studies in wing action by which to identify species. We watch almost in awe as great bunches of mallards, their wings rustling sibilantly, sweep overhead. Around them, with arrow-like speed, dart projectiled teal.

"Hal," I ask, "when old Wilt Leeton was so mean and devilish

and grasping, he must have made a slug of dough off subsidies and all that sort of New Deal shenanigan?"

"Naw," Hal says, "that's a funny damn thing. He never mixed up in it but always had a sort of fierce, peculiar pride as to his personal politics. His father was a very gallant Confederate officer, so naturally Wilt, like you and me, was raised a more or less Yellow-Dog Democrat. He never shoved himself forward. Just stayed a dignified regular Democrat, and I doubt if he ever took a subsidy off anything in his life. I'll have to give him a clean bill of health along those lines, and I wouldn't be surprised but what that part of his character stood up when his hardest test came." Hal turns the car around and we head up the greasy road toward the gravel highway. I have to get out and open the gates through Mrs. Payne's place. At the last one Hal leans out the window and says—"Them are sure heavy gates ain't they?"

"Yes," I say, "they sure are," and climb on back in the car.

"Well," he says, "if th' effort has weakened you, maybe we had better sip a li'l sump'n in honor of our liberation from these here gates—but remember—we gotta be in that pin oak flat up the bayou before daylight."





WHAT REALLY HAPPENS OUT QUAIL SHOOTING?

WELL mounted, we follow a brace of rambling, perfectly broken birds dogs across typical bobwhite gunning country of the Deep South. Or, with our bird guns and a wise setter and pointer of medium range but unerring noses, we trudge in search of bebies to which only such fellow travelers can steer us.

Wintered hill-and-dale of great promise affords many adventures. Muffled or breeze-blown, occasional staccato reports drift from brown-belted knolls and lowlands shimmering ocean-like in reflections off sunlit, tawny sedges. Or again, from somber uplands where frost-painted hardwoods and conifer splashings twist plaid girdles from midriffs of open country. "Late of an afternoon," writes a friend, "you can sniff smoke rising from plantation cabins, to me a mixture of burning oak, pine, and cedar. With a touch of sadness, I see this old life afield slipping away."

At evening, following hunter's hearty repast, we meditate by the fire and mull our day's transpirings. Bevy-by-singles-

rise, and hit-by-miss, ours and our dogs' ledgers are audited. What really happened? The whys-and-wherefores of certain covey finds or unproductives, backs, trailings, and retrieves! Reprimands are administered. Citations are awarded for skill above and beyond the call of canine duties. Then, parade of our own gunning alibis, until, about run out of same, our senses of humor prevail, and, yawning, we yield to the sandman.

Maybe our dogs were youngsters, "derbies" to the field trial fraternity. Or, "all-age" veterans, canny, bold, and hardened. Steady to wing and shot, or, alas, still problem children as to shooting-field behaviors. Let's be optimists, however, qualifying them as mannerly in all respects, and tiptop bird-finders. In such case there is certainly no kick coming in good bird country.

Recently, Dr. Paul Jensen, of Cornell University, using thirteen field-useless specimens sent by sportsmen-owners, is reported to have studied gun-shyness in bird dogs. He appraised them abnormal, on a basis comparable to "shell shock" and other human neuroses. Competent bird-dog handlers have long known that gun dogs can be "gun-shy," "bird-shy," and "man-shy." Separately, or all at once. From bird-shyness stems one bird-dog neurosis influencing one of the most misunderstood tribulations of pointing—called "blinking." That phase, however, is a chapter all its own.

It has also long been known that by patient treatment many bird dogs, like afflicted humans, can be rehabilitated for usefulness afield. I have owned and worked with bird dogs and retrievers cringing at the mere sight of a weapon. But by exercise of kindness and infinitely patient individual approach and progressive readjustment of disturbing contacts, I have seen such animals jump for joy at sight of a gun. Shorn of frustrations, they came to associate the fowling piece with pleasures afield, and bounded happily away. Or, gently supported and

talked-to through initial nose-discoveries, like a child nursed through paroxysms of bad dreams, they have come to shake off and surmount such inhibitions.

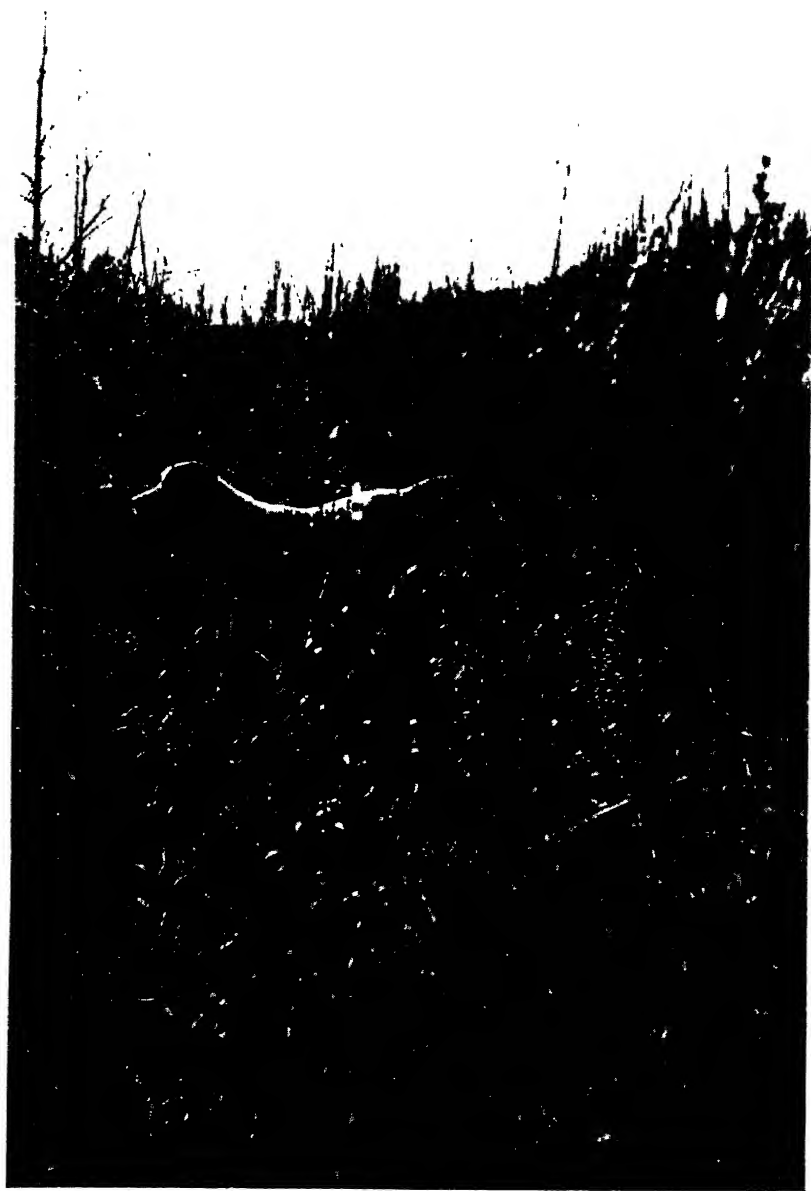
Riding along, dismounting anon for bevy rises or snap tries at tricky singles twisting through the blackjacks, let's attempt analysis of incidents ahead of, and even behind, the dogs. Maybe that ordinarily lofty-pointing setter of yours dropped on point? Why? For there is a generally misunderstood phase of dog work in quail gunning. What about your pointer's standing that covey a long way off with that "chokebored" nose of his? What about "bird scent" itself? What happens to confound the experts and quiz-kids of gunner's row? I have often wished I could sit in on a post-quail-hunt dogs' conference, and hear their sides of the questions. The chances are that many of us would slink away in shame for lost tempers and hard words.

Why do dogs sometimes drop on point, or gradually crouch into prone or semiprone positions upon contacting quail scent? What part of such posturing is natural, synthetic, habitual, or inherited? Or is the move wholly and instinctively precautionary when the dog's nose warns—"Too close to game"? What canine neuroses, inhibitions, complexes, allergies, and other "deep-stuffs" lurk in bird dog make-ups? Is dropping on point a throwback to some ancestor of the studbooks or bar sinister? Should it count against a dog under field trial judgment?

My personal reaction, based wholly upon practical experience and observation while breaking gun dogs, is that many factors control or influence the trait. Heredity can very easily play a role. Some dogs have a habit of barking furiously when cast away for a field trial or day's hunt. You then oftentimes hear the remark, "That dog's sire" (or grandsire) "barked like that." Or, when a bird dog running at full speed goes to "yippling," it may be solely from the sheer joy of release—like schoolboys



“What canine neuroses, inhibitions, complexes and allergies lurk in bird dog make-ups?”



“With a touch of sadness I see this old life afield slipping away.”

yelling when they rush from classrooms at recess. I therefore dissent that dropping on point should count against a field trial dog, provided the animal's attitude on game is of known loftiness and intensity, and the crouching not too often repeated. Essences of heredity, control, training, scent provocations, and canine metabolisms enter the picture. Some are within our powers of analysis. Others are far beyond our present knowledge or control.

All upland gunners admire and some purists demand "fire" when a bird dog strikes game. But there are times when dogs otherwise vested with great beauty on point—drop! An orthodox bird dog may suddenly become allergic to surroundings, ownership, and training habits through causes utterly beyond its control. So why chalk up dropping on point as a generally unfavorable reaction to game? Conclusively, a field-trial or top shooting dog habitually dropping on point does not fill the competitive picture. The practice becomes tiresome, and such dogs are hard to find in anything like tight country and close cover.

In earlier days some of the best sportsmen broke their dogs to drop on point. My father and some of his friends used dogs that struck and stood their birds magnificently. Depending upon the terrain, and at caution, they sank into tautened crouches. And there they quivered until the handler clucked them into a deliberate flush. At wing and shot they dropped again, and remained prone until ordered to fetch. I frequently gun with John Bailey of Coffeeville, Mississippi. His pointer bitch, "Old Miss," known as Queen, has magnificent range, nose, steadiness, and pointing "fire." But she has learned, when striking scent at the edge of some impenetrable thicket or precipitous, thorn-shrubbed gully, to quietly drop and await John's size-up of the situation. Getting effective shooting positions under such cir-

cumstances is often ticklish or fruitless business. Instead of tearing through a thicket, or, completely off balance, sliding downhill into the middle of a bevy, John wagers on his own size-up of the wind and quail habits. He whistles sharply to Queen after he has taken post. She is up and off like a shot.

Eight times out of ten, John's guess, plus confidence in his bitch's powers of quick and accurate relocation, gains more open shots and brings to bag bobwhites at which we might otherwise not have had a go. True, the bitch could have stood there beautifully while we tore around trying to move her bevy. It resolves into Queen's having learned to drop and rest, while her boss takes over. If anything goes wrong, she knows that she will not be blamed. I have watched her craftily relocate outside the wind, before coming in closer to round and herd the bobs our way like a crack sheep dog moving its charges into a fold.

Is the dropping instinct allied to the cat's or tiger's when stalking prey? Or, by warning scent, purely a directive for extreme caution? An innate impulse that makes any well-broken retriever crouch behind or alongside its master when the latter crawls up on a bunch of ducks? Or are the bird dog's olfactory passages sometimes just so suddenly smothered with overpowering bird scent as to compel application of its "air brakes"? A mere galvanic effort to keep from getting too close to game and thereby avoid the dog's recognized acceptance of fault and correction—if not actual punishment?

You have undoubtedly watched a bird dog running at full speed strike scent, skid, slide, and all but roll over in a desperate effort not to flush? And seen its look of almost relieved professional pride in escape from the mistake and its consequences to your pleasure? After such a thrilling and beautiful exhibition in your behalf (especially if you downed a pair of birds from

the ensuing rise), don't forget to reward your companion with a caress. You'll remember its expression of loving appreciation, too. Or, at least, you should, for that is one of quail shooting's most exquisite moments.

Field trial galleries exclaim when championship contenders stand game in statuesque intensity. When they are called upon to relocate, however, after a handler's efforts to move quarry have proved in vain, techniques vary. Some dogs go at the job with confident nose-abandon. Others probe adjacent coverts with hesitant, slinking caution. It all depends, of course, upon the individual animal's nose analysis of air currents, its "bird sense," plus an inferiority or superiority complex as to the task. Too, the dog undoubtedly takes whistle orders in the manner to which it has become accustomed through training routine.

Field trial dogs are often described as poor shooting dogs. I cannot remember any really great field trial dog or National Field Trial Champion that was not a first-class gunning companion. But there is a vast difference between types of hunting and hunters. As to dogs, it amounts to the difference between trap shooters classed "AA" and those in the "A" bracket. As to actual gunning qualifications, it depends wholly upon how well the individual is broken to handle on game while covering country selected through its own instincts or signaled by the handler. Proponents of and scoffers at field trial animals as shooting dogs are simply thinking about two entirely different gunning proposals, that's all.

Field trial judges sometimes, when a dog has run a corking heat in all respects save one, find opportunity to mark down some singles and direct the animal's handler to "work him" on them. They not only wish to see how readily but how efficiently the contestant responds, whether it be an amateur stake or the national title. Ensues what is the crux of any quail gunner's

making a bag-limit or not. Provided, of course, he can down the birds pointed. After a "big-going" field trial dog has been ordered on from a bevy find, it is not the easiest matter to halt its flaming spirit and bring it in to pussyfoot marked birds. But judges with a possible winner in sight want to know everything there is in a bird dog's dossier. Only too often the bad will take care of itself. Any great field trial championship requires an absolutely broken, tireless, and intelligent victor. Watch such a one ordered in, under judgment, to hunt single birds!

Responding readily to the handler's whistle, the animal joins up and is directed, by a now dismounted trainer, to "hunt close." Thereafter the dog is directed almost wholly by whistle; recognizing tonal shadings registering need for change of pace, direction, or caution. Depending upon the type of cover under search, it is highly interesting to observe how an intelligent bird dog instantly senses the work cut out for it and goes about it accordingly. With delicate nose-probing it ticks off finds, one by one, and at flush and kill, the dog is rock-staunch until ordered on to retrieve.

Not infrequently, in the greatest trials, dogs point singles while en route to a "fetch." I have seen them point with dead birds in their tender jaws. In fact, I saw that while judging the 1945 National Free-for-All Championship at Shuqualak, Mississippi, last February. Thus, dogs proven under all phases of handling control and bird-contact manners, are then sent on to qualify for the flights of speed, finding, and stamina required of a true champion. Many a field-trial or plain shooting dog called in to hunt singles finds it necessary, at times, to drop on point. Then is when the judge's powers of analysis should apply. Nine times out of ten, the dogs know best. And if the gunner isn't up for the shot, he, and not the dog, is to blame.

In fact, at field trials and when just "out hunting," bird dogs are faulted for factors far beyond their control. Field trial gallery judgment is as variably erroneous as that of witnesses to accidents and murders. In field trials or the shooting field, wind, weather, terrain, cover, and above all, movement of a bevy ahead of the dog or dogs, may combine to put even the craftiest animals "in Dutch" for the moment. That is why, according to such lifetime field trial judges as the late Mr. Hobart Ames and the late Messrs. Arthur Merriman and James Avent, officials should have full knowledge, from long gunning contacts, of the habits and probable reactions under dog-pressure of the game-bird species under judgment. In other words, under any and all conditions, what the birds themselves are liable to do.

While judging an Amateur Quail Championship of America trial I noticed a fine, upstanding pointer that occasionally sank on point. Later, after it had run an enviable heat in the National Champion Stake, I saw the same dog, not long before "take up time," point at the edge of some sedge. When the handler came up, the dog dropped. Entering the sedge patch, the handler whipped everywhere except a far corner of the patch and returned, more or less disgusted, to his pointer. He was about to order him on when one of the judges said, "Give him a chance." The dog instantly plunged into the straw, dashed to the corner into which the handler had failed to prod, and dropped. He had his birds, too.

You see quite a bit of dropping on point when dogs intelligent enough to play the wind work Huns and prairie chickens in Canada. Judging field trials and shooting up there has given me opportunities galore to study such happenings and reactions. It is extremely interesting to observe dog behaviors among animals broken on such game and those contacting the species for the first time. Edgar Queeny's magnificent setter, Wingmead

Billy, handled both species flawlessly the first time he ever scented them.

But his brace-mate, a rugged pointer named Major, equally wide and fast and as perfectly broken on bobwhites of the South, could never adjust himself to Huns or prairie chickens unless he caught scent where he couldn't see the birds themselves. When that happened we had no trouble, and Major was a picture. But when he saw ground game in low cover, he couldn't take it. First dropping, he then took them out to the horizon. Returning abjectly apologetic, he struggled desperately to make amends.

As to a really great field-trial dog's dropping on point, witness the first find by Bye-Bye, the streamlined and spectacular Sage-Morton pointer bitch placed second to her full litter-brother, Bonsoir, in the National Free-for-All Derby Championship at Shuqualak, Mississippi, February 1944. Some thought Bye-Bye won the stake, but that is neither here nor there. Morton, searching for her after a far-flung cast, shouted "*Point!*" Fortunately, as one of the judges, I got up quickly after a hard ride through matted grasses. Emerging into a lespedeza clearing, it took me a few seconds to spot the bitch. She had dropped and hunkered even closer when her devoted handler approached. Press representatives galloping up had to be warned against accidentally trampling the animal.

At tremendous speed, Bye-Bye had run smack-dab into the very heart of a widely scattered, feeding bevy. She applied her air brakes and, just as you and I do when someone shouts, "Look out, yonder come some ducks," she crouched. Actually, she must have seen a bird too, for when Morton flushed the gang and shot, a cock bob zoomed within a foot of Bye-Bye's nose. Her ensuing finds were thrilling spectacles of blazing, high-headed intensity.

When humbly foot-gunning, your dog's dropping on point may oftentimes be the animal's innate perception of and reaction to the job immediately "in nose." To wit: getting you or me some shooting while trying to do the job as best it knows how. When you lose your dog and find it dropped on point, think it over before becoming vexed at what some may call a bad habit. You manage to score a double from the ensuing flush, and proceed somewhat mollified after your hunt for old Dell. Suppose, however, old Dell hadn't managed to stop and flop when he hit that bevy scent? You'd have charged him with a flush, gotten sore, and certainly not have managed your successful right-and-left. With a split second of nose-warning, however, old Dell dropped—and saved you the shot. Now let's turn to the quail's side of the picture.

What is the quail odor bird dogs scent? Their "nose power," comparatively, matches "eye power" in hawks. Some authorities describe game-bird scent as carried off particles dropping from feathers to feet and to the ground. Air currents aswirl along the ground act as conveyors. The old-timers differentiated between "foot scent" and "body scent." A strong-running bird dog whips into a blazing point! Has it caught foot or body scent? Some dogs run with low heads. Such animals are supposed to run, for the most part, on foot scent. Are the odors the same, just "blown" differently?

Surely you have dressed many a bobwhite? Or regretfully picked them up in the field so badly shot-up or dog-mangled as to expose pulverized or pulped entrails and organs? If so, you must know the cloying, sweetishly acrid, and, not overly offensive odor? A blend of decomposing grains or seeds in the bird's digestive and excretive canals. Regardless of the dogs, observant hunters often detect the nearabouts of a bobwhite bevy by fresh droppings of telltale white pellet-smears.

Does the high-headed dog that "points its game a long way off" strike scent off these comparatively fresh droppings? Is their fume more rank than the "body particles" shed from feathers to feet and ground? Does the dog get the same odor we do in dressing birds? If so, how does the high-headed dog handle foot scent with equal alacrity and facility?

How goes the proposition when applied to scattered birds? Should the gunner mark them as carefully as possible and put the dogs on them at once? Most gunners do, and on moist ground, singles are oftentimes found promptly enough. But many hunters come from the hills declaring, "We just couldn't find any single birds." Aside from unconditioned, tired dogs, with their noses clogged by sinus-affecting seed and grass fuzz, outside factors intervene. Dog reactions vary amazingly. The best of "nose-confident" dogs occasionally flush singles and stop in utter bewilderment. With inexperienced masters along, much cussing ensues. Those singles may, or may not, have moved a foot after they lit. Have you watched a flushed quail sail by and pitch close by? You saw what happened? It either ran like all-get-out or hunkered down to actually pant with fright. Here is how one of the oldest and best bird hunters I know, deposes:

Like you, I suspect body and foot scent are two distinct odors; one being quail sweat-glands or "B.O.," and the other, functional body discharge. When birds fly up, I have an idea they lose some of both odors; depending on the distances they fly, and their age, too. I may be wholly wrong, but I have better luck on singles by checking my dog a bit before putting him on the scattered birds. It gives them a bit of time to move about, exude, or drop foot scent. But about the time I begin to think I know or have discovered something, the dogs or birds pull stunts which upset all my theories. We give both animals and birds too little credit for thinking their ways out of trouble. Bird dogs have their greatest difficulty with singles when a state's quail shooting season opens too early. Cover is too

deep and green and the birds' very immaturity bewilders them into lying closer and failing to cast either foot or body scent. Unquestionably you've noticed how your singles-shooting betters as the season lengthens?

Some bird dogs are incredibly bright. It is well they cannot talk or many of us hunters would get bawled out by them for putting blame where it didn't belong. As matters stand, we are still in the dark ages of true analysis as to scenting conditions, air currents, and their actions in relaying vagrant odors of all sorts. Can we explain why otherwise perfect retrievers pass within a foot of a quail lying flat on its back, dead as a hammer, and never sniff it? Unless it just happened to see the bird, or you pointed it out, the dog finally abandoned the search. Yet five minutes later, under different surroundings, the same dog effected a difficult fetch, with ease.

How often have your dogs struck apparently red-hot scent, tried desperately to locate—but failed? What happened? Did some person or predatory animal or bird flush the feeding or moving bevy? How many times, late of an afternoon, have your dogs trailed or roaded for a quarter-mile, only to stand puzzled at no further trace of the bobs? Chances are those fellows simply ran a while and then flew to a favored roosting ground. Had you been sooner on their schedule, you'd have gotten the shot.

Next time your dog drops on point, pause, hesitate, and reflect. Put your own perhaps latent powers of dog, bird, and scent analysis briskly to work. You may be in or on a spot, and get badly tricked. You may not fancy the dog's dropping any more than he, or she, fancies having it to do. Remember: you should have stood stock still when they hollered, "Look out, yonder come some ducks." But you didn't. Instinctively, you crouched, and probably dipped some ice-cold water over your

boot tops, too. Your dog's nose warned it to stop, at all costs, and it did—by dropping.

Personally, beyond a dog's deliberately flushing or chewing up birds, I find no fault when a staunch, hard-working animal drops, trails, roads, low-heads, or even barks on point. When really out hunting I enjoy watching them all work out their immediate problems in their own ways and to the best of their respective abilities. I am neither purist nor carping critic with shells in my tubes. I like trigger tension and a high premium on snap shooting in tight places. After all, when a brave and companionable bird dog does the best it knows how, to afford me pleasure, who the hell am I not to accept its offerings in humble or glamorous capacity other than with sincere appreciation? So, try looking in behind, next time you're afield, to see what really happens.

Hunters of the Neanderthal and Pleistocene times had far more sensitive smelling apparatus than our gunners' clan of today, up against it as we are, with the dusts and smogs of an allergy-ridden civilization. Even the "mountain men" of our vast and earliest West, and their pioneering eastern fathers before them, swore they "could smell Injuns." Cattle crazed by thirst have stampeded to get at water smelled miles away. The bloodhound's ability to pick up and unravel scent long cold is proverbial. So, until we can improve our own noses to the point of detecting game-bird scents, let's study dog reactions and weather angles more carefully while gunning. It will sharpen our woods-wits and make us better shots—maybe. Certainly it will afford us more and better tries and make us fairer to man's best friend—the dog.



JANUARIES AFIELD

JUST the other evening my sweet lady and I were rather dubiously trying for a doubtful tally on our "meat points" for the week-end. Fortunately her businesslike administration of wartime household denials won through and there was red meat enough in sight to sustain her old man's Sunday afternoon off at golf and his efforts to keep up with a younger generation off the tee. After the ration books were put away, I got to thinking about several periods in a somewhat hectic career afield when it became necessary not only to outstalk one's quarry but to place a bullet just right in order to make connection with camp meat conspicuous by its absence for some days. Then I recalled three January duck shoots and the parts they played in providing meat-in-the-pot for important social shindigs.

Federal duck gunning season ended in our southern zone January 31, and I had been delegated by the directors of our newly organized University Club to get ducks enough for a twenty-couple banquet. With the last day coming up and only one blind reported any good at Wapanoca, I took the train that

afternoon with considerable misgiving. Aboard I found Wilson and Mr. R., the latter a crotchety old curmudgeon who wanted the earth with a fence around it and you to paint the fence. At the club Wilson confided to me that old man R. had bet him a dollar that I would draw first chance for stands and take the only one reported good—the Willow Poles. And sure enough, after Mrs. Hixon had shaken up the number one, two, and three pills in the leather bottle, I was handed the number one pellet. Old man R. barely repressed a groan and turned away to read his paper, looking quite disgruntled.

Whereupon I walked down to the boat landing before making up my mind on which stand to take. A heavy wind was blowing up out of the north and there was no moon. Chances were the ducks weren't going to sit in the middle of a lake two miles across each way and "take it." They'd work in under the blow somehow, and the Willow Poles, where shooting was reported best, would be exposed. So I went back to old man R. and said, "I'm going to make it a case of age before beauty, and first choice is yours—help yourself." He "hemmed and hawed," but ended by accepting the gift and naturally pounced upon the Willow Poles. Wilson said he'd work around the willow side of the big lake, and I chose to play rover. Incidentally, Wilson and I agreed to catch the noon local train back to the city next day.

Next morning our three boats left the club dock at its strictly kept seven-o'clock "leaving-out time," made our way up Big Creek into Little Lake without raising many ducks, cut through Cross-Arms and out into Big Lake. Old man R. hit across the open water and Wilson skirted away from me to the south. Neither had taken the trouble, the night before or now, to consider wind or weather. There wasn't a duck to be seen

across that vast expanse of water; usually it was black with rafted birds.

Taking out my powerful binoculars I searched the lake's extreme rims slowly and carefully. To my left and the north a deep cove of some ten or twelve acres of wintered saw grass, known as Trexler's Corner, let into the sere shore line. The heavy wind sweeping in over the cove had about blown the shallow water out into the big lake of chopping whitecaps; I could actually see the mud flats in places. The eight-power lenses drew the yellow stalks right into my eyes. Suddenly, about the middle of the grass field, I spotted a big bunch of ducks rising and as quickly relighting. The process began to be repeated all over the place. There was but one answer to such procedure. The whole cove was packed with ducks, banking in under the gale. There were so many of them they were actually crowding and shoving for feeding space. Mose, my paddler, clung to the shore line and we actually crossed the outer fringe of the saw grass without disturbing a single bird. I knew that a narrow, shallow run opened into the cover on its far side. Turning into that, we cautiously pushed toward the base of the cove.

Rounding a turn in the broadening trail, a great mass of mallards leaped in a roar from the stalks and the wind whipped them overhead and lakeward. Ahead a hundred yards I noticed a tiny island topped with a dead willow clump and made for it. By then several thousand ducks, clashing with the thunder of express trains meeting, were air-borne and pushed ahead by others rising from the marsh. To have fired a shot would have violated a cardinal principle of such discovery in duck shooting. Let them go undisturbed; they'll be back. My job was to get comfortably fixed, decoys spread, and, by all means, send Mose

after Wilson. I didn't suspect, I practically knew, or would have gambled my last dollar, what was about to ensue.

In a jiffy I scattered two dozen mallard decoys about the easily waded pool. Mose was already in pursuit of Wilson, and a bit later I was comfortably seated on a willow butt with my shell box handy. My watch said half past eight, straight down. I can still see the first bunch of returning ducks; fighting the wind, banking under it, catching sight of my decoys and spreading into them like homing pigeons. I had two guns with me, a 12-gauge autoloader and my 34-inch Parker double, but had deliberately left the autoloader in the boat. When I looked at my watch again it was nine o'clock straight up and I had twenty-five ducks, sprigs and mallards, scattered over the opening. Far across the lake I could see Wilson following Mose back to our discovery of the Promised Land.

Setting my gun against the clump, I began picking up my birds, and was about half through the job when I sighted a bunch of geese heading along the timber line eastward. Then was when I wished for the autoloader, for they circled but once and rushed in across the top of a cypress point. I let them well down and, by great good luck, downed two stone dead with my first tube and a third on the flare. I had my ducks ready when Wilson transferred into my stand, left him my decoys, and struck out for the clubhouse. He rejoined me there at eleven-thirty with his own limit and two more geese. Old man R. stayed out all day up at the Willow Poles and bagged four ducks. Our club banquet was a pleasure.

Then there was the morning Percy Galbreath waked me from sound slumber with a demand that I accompany him to Lakeside club; he would be by in half an hour and we could breakfast at Thompson's. It was, he reported, colder than a banker's heart and had snowed a bit. Such a thing as my refusing

the mission never seemed to occur to him, and probably with good cause. Fortified with ham and eggs, black coffee, and buttered toast, we were at the clubhouse by good daylight. And there we found Ollie Krebs disgustedly thawing out the frozen radiator of his automobile. He reported the lake frozen tighter than Dick's hatband and stated with great emphasis that we could stick around like suckers, but as for himself he was gone from here right now. A few moments later he departed in a cloud of steam.

From the boat platform those same glasses of mine revealed an open hole across the lake and half a mile below us, directly in front of number two platform blind. The opening was black with ducks and geese, and into and out of it flocks were trading. There must be another open-water pond in the iced east end of the lake; those ducks were coming from and going to—some place. The thing to do was change into our shooting clothes, get good and warm, and plan a campaign. Big and Little Jim, the two club paddlers, were instructed to put two double-ender duck boats on a wood sled, hitch the mule to it, and fill one boat with all available wooden decoys. When that was done, drag the load down the lake bank to opposite the ice hole, break a starting lane through the ice and await our coming. And they were all ready when Percy and I, with guns and shell boxes, rushed up for inspection.

Long since gone, with me, was the accepted way of "breaking ice" to a blind: one man up front slashing and splashing, the other pushing ahead. Exhausting labor it was, too. Now Big and Little Jim were stationed well back in a duck boat and told to run it clean onto the ice. Then a bit of wallowing around, it broke through, and the process was repeated. It was slow, but the boat was ice-cut and it was sure and comparatively easy work. As we approached the ice hole, the ducks and geese

streamed away, protesting vociferously. When we saw the paddlers scattering the decoys, Percy and I embarked and were soon on the blind and with our boat hidden beneath it. Our helpers recrossed the lake under orders to report at sundown. They had hardly gained the bank before our first customers pitched into the decoys.

Bunch after bunch, flock after flock of mallards, gadwall, sprig, widgeon, and low-rushing bands of wheeling scaups dove recklessly about our stool. The platform wasn't overly roomy, and as Percy was using an autoloader amid vast excitement, the pace became a bit disconcerting at times. But I finally restored order by suggesting that each fellow take five shells and get what he could with them without the other's butting in. By that method one could keep track of what he killed and no post-mortems were necessary after each barrage. Before sundown we yelled ashore for the helpers and were in the clubhouse sipping hot toddies by the time the sled arrived with our fifty handsome birds.

That night the thermometer really dove zeroward. Late January in the Mississippi River lowlands can hold its own with Eskimo-land in brittle temperatures when the going gets good. But that mass of fowl kept the ice hole open all night. We could hear their calls and flapping and the honking of geese while we breakfasted. The pushers had left our boats turned up on the lake bank, and our trail of yesterday was refrozen. In fact it took longer to rock and wriggle through than for the original passage. But it was worth the struggle. By nine-thirty we were through and in addition took toll of four geese from a flock of eight that crossed the open water. Eighty of those ducks and four of the geese went to St. Peter's Orphanage and the Church Home, and we had a good laugh at the expense of Ollie Krebs

for beating a retreat because the weather was fit for neither man nor beast.

There was another day, too, in January, when our whole region lay under snow and ice. Beaver Dam lake was reported from the clubhouse as under skating ice. My dear old setter Hays looked at me at lunchtime with definite appeal in big brown eyes, so I put him into the baggage car that afternoon and for an hour and a half watched a dreary landscape wheel past the car window. It was dusk when we detrained at Beaver Dam, and a breath of slightly warmer wind sobbed in from the north. It might rain, it might snow, it might do anything. There was no use planning anything; the lake ice could be sledded and Horace advised just starting out to see what we could find, in the morning.

That setter Hays, incidentally, was one of the best all-around gun dogs I've ever been privileged to follow. He was from a stock of dogs bred around Miller, Mississippi, by old Dud Searcy; deep liver on white, sturdily conformed, tireless, courageous, true-nosed, and a retriever from Who-Laid-the-Rail. Hays belonged to my business partner, but ours was a sort of "share-the-kennel-wealth," and Hays was perfectly happy with either or both of us. He was an affectionate, sensible fellow and, as some dogs are, gifted with an extraordinarily beautiful sense of humor. That night he slept under a quilt on the foot of my bed.

Next morning after a hearty breakfast for the three of us, Horace, Hays, and I gathered at the dock and brought those same binoculars of mine into play. It was a morning of bleak, wet gray with no suggestion of sunrise. Just a film of snow had fallen during the night, and the lake's expanse of ice was a pallid field. My glasses searched the opposite lake shore with its long fringe of saw grass outside the willow line. My pulse skipped a few beats, for there was a long line of black, open

water extending outside the grass stems and reaching far south until it disappeared behind the jut of the Hog Stand timber. And the lane of water was packed with ducks. Then I made another discovery. Leading off that lane of open water was a run heading out into the lake. Horace took the glasses and studied the situation.

"We kin put d' boat on d'ice an' walk out yonder t' dat openin', den git in an' paddle t' d' grass an' hide d' boat—dem ducks will come back. If dey don't, I'll git ashore an' walk down de bank an' raise 'em fum below."

Hays hopped into the duck boat and sat at rigid attention as Horace and I, with paddles fore and aft, guided it sledlike across the ice. We each wore armpit waders, for, if we broke through, it was no morning to be caught wet. At the junction point of water and ice, the latter bent but held. Putting up flocks of ducks ahead of us, Horace and I reached shelter in the tall saw grass and tossed out a smattering of decoys. Hays was cautioned against going overboard and sat at whining attention amid the deep straw. We hadn't long to wait, and that morning I was shooting a 12-bore autoloader with cylinder barrel. Horace and Hays and I were frankly meat gunning.

The limit was twenty-five birds a day then and in the next hour, shooting big ducks only, we had downed fifteen. Many and many a flight of teal had whipped past our hide, to say nothing of endless sarabands of blackjack, spoonies, and thin sprigs. And there was only one hen among those fourteen greenheads, too. Finally Hays got very nervous and demanded to be taken ashore immediately.

Tossing him over my shoulder, Horace taking my gun, we waded through the muck and made shore after something of a struggle. Put down, Hays at once got busy across a few acres of cotton. Horace and I hadn't got started well before he spied

two big fox squirrels scurrying aloft in a pecan tree. Down they came and the shooting brought not only Hays but a little colored boy and his feist dog wandering along. He watched Horace pocket the two nut-crackers and volunteered some information.

"Mist' Ho'ace," said he, "I jumped er big passel o' pottiges up yonder in de fiel'—dey flewed down yonder an' lit in dat yaller grass in de new groun'."

Hays was taking in every word the darky boy said and looked at me for instructions. Pointing toward the sedge grass and weed patch, I simply said, "Hunt close!" Hays broke away swiftly, but slowed as he neared the heavier cover. An instant later his spine caved in three inches and his head shot forward in the beautiful posture for which he was noted. Up went his long, heavily plumed tail. Horace chuckled. Up—and down—went a single cock bird, with Hays as steady as a drill sergeant under fire. I clucked and he pussyfooted deeper into the tangle—what a thriller that next point was. I had reloaded, and this time the singles rose scatteringly. Four of them stayed behind and when the shooting was over, Hays, one by one, fetched all five birds. The little darky boy said he knew "whar dee wuz some mo' big hovers o' birds." Horace countered by stating that if he produced one, let alone two of said big "hovers," he could earn two bits. Our guide pointed up the lake bank toward a clearing and the hunt got back under way.

Hays went scuffling along ahead of us in the thick cover of sloping lake bank. There was a flurry and scurry and out into the open broke two tremendous swamp rabbits. Come to think of it, there was about the only double on hares I ever recall making, but end-over-end they went, with the darky boy practically beating Hays to the retrieve. Horace gralloched them and gave them to the black boy to carry.

Walking along, Horace gave me instructions as to the preparation of those fat rabbits for our table. "Dress 'em widout no watah, Mist' Nash, an' den soak 'em in wine f' two, three days—den sorta slow-cook an' steam em wid plenty mo' wine wid d' gravy. Be toastin' plenty o' thin bread sopped in country butter an' serve d' whole bizness jes' lak Miss Irma cooks her quails." His instructions were interrupted by our arrival at what was known as the Oliver Hole landing, a woods pocket above whose shallow waters were heaped mounds of dead, wet lake moss. We paused to drink from a clear-flowing bank spring, and just then Horace whispered—"Look, Mist Nash, jes' look at de snipes." The whole place was alive with them, flocks flitting from one bunch of moss to another, others darting and whipping back and forth across the timber-locked pool. Knowing what Hays would attempt when the first bird fell, I had Horace collar him. Before going into action I took stock of shells.

At my first shot the whole place seemed to fly away; in only one other incident of my shooting career do I ever recall having seen more snipe in the air at one moment. It was simply impossible to drive them out of that pocket, and when I'd exhausted the box of eights I had to spare, the little lad and I, with the aid of a dugout hitched to the bank, retrieved eighteen fine, fat jacks. Thence the hunt moved back into the open and Hays was put on his mettle to really produce. By eleven o'clock he had turned up three bevies in perfect form, and as I shot my last of fifty bird loads we'd started with, down came the twelfth of the bobwhites, chalking that bag to seventeen. That's right, eighteen snipe, seventeen quail, two fox squirrels, and two swamp rabbits. Thirty-nine hits out of fifty shells, take 'em as they came, high, wide, or handsome. We went back to the boat and by noon I had easily taken the ten more ducks remaining

to my limit-due of twenty-five. The trip home across the ice was accomplished in safety.

I stowed away a magnificent lunch of smothered duck, dumplings, greens, peas and crackling bread, with all the buttermilk I could consume and a slice of egg-custard pie. Hays and Horace didn't do so badly by themselves, either. Then I napped until just before train time and joined Horace on the platform. Even for the ducks and other game I had, I thought my heavy canvas and leather pack bag felt mighty heavy. "Yaas, suh," Horace explained, "Mollie she said she knowed how fond Miss Irma is o' fresh-baked poke-hams, so, ez she had done killed jes' befo' dis col' spell, she laid aside a fine ham' f' you an' de Mistis."

So you see, in these Januaries of tautened nerves, aching hearts, tightened belts, ration books and "all-out" conservation of everything except time, labor, and money for Victory, it may be well to look back upon days which even in their well-observed ethics of sporting decencies were heading faster than most realized down the long road to wildlife frustrations.

And it is well to remember that most of us who gunned in the days of what seems excessively large bag-limits are those who, for the most part, have gone along with the federal government and the states in their programs not only for restoration but for the educational and financial means with which to back them up. And in the weeks, months, and perhaps years ahead, in the matter of self-denial in ammunition for sport, let's use "the old days" as inspiration in what should and will be a battle to keep the game flying when the boys come home. Let it not come amiss to sit down with someone near and dear to you afield, someone with whom you shared halcyon days out-of-doors—and dream together of old comrades, faithful servants, and eager bird dogs.



JAIL BREAK

WHAZZAMARRER'TH you back yonder—gone t' sleep? Turn th' boat—n-n-o-o-o! Not thataway—thisaway! Back me off, Arch, you—you—black fiend!”

“Yaas suh, Mist' Frank, I'se tryin' t' turn dis corruptious thing, but whicheverway does you really wanta be turnt?”

“Wiggle with 'im, Arch! Whoopeeeee! This is th' biggest bass I've ever hooked, an' if you lose 'im, you better dive outa this tub an' start swimmin', 'cause I'll sho' knock a knot on yo' head!”

“I'll lay wid 'im, Mist' Frank, but you better ac' diff'unt wid dis feesh; you ain' tormentin' no yaller-cat. You better lemme set you on d' bank an' horse 'im onto dry lan'.”

That was what Horace, our colored major-domo, and I heard that bright summer forenoon when, equipped with tackle familiar to indulgently expectant and mendaciously self-confident fly fishermen, we neared the boat dock at old Beaver Dam Ducking Club. Horace grinned and laid a warning finger across his lips. Tiptoeing the catwalk, we peeped

around a wooded corner into a cypress- and willow-lined cove.

The barrage of expletives, laid down by a towering figure in weather-whitened coveralls and five-gallon straw sombrero, issued from a rocking, low-sided bateau a bit offshore. It centered, apparently, in the precarious craft's steersman, a very black, grizzled, pot-bellied negro who was trying frantically to comply with his patron's bellowed but constantly changing directives.

The fisherman, recognized by now as lawyer Frank Attabury, wildfowler of parts, my old friend and the club's attorney, was desperately fighting a finny customer of obviously important poundage. Spray flew like mist from a waxed line zigzagging along the snaggy brushline. We glimpsed the leviathan, all but out of control and doing giant-swings at the end of a too-taut leader and horseshoed rodtip. A tackle crash seemed inevitable, but, with a deft dip and riposte of his rod's-point, Mister Attabury staved off disaster.

"Git me aroun' faster, Arch! T-h-e-r-e-t-h-a-t's-b-e-t-t-e-r-! He's gittin' tired—e-e-a-a-s-s-y-y n-o-w-e-a-s-y!"

A moment of enormously silent tension.

"Hol' th' boat steady, Arch! Don' jiggle it like that! Git yo' landin' net ready—let'm float over it—don't scoop at 'im—e-e-a-a-s-s-y-y n-o-w-c-a-r-e-f-u-l!" Arch, obediently shipping his paddle and truculently upthrusting the sleeves of his tattered jumper, licked his fat chops and brandished the net.

Mister Frank's face, as he leaned backward upon his boat chair's dachshund legs and lofted his guiding rod-tip, was that of one with life's savings and reputation at stake. His bulging eyes wore the fixed and beatific stare of a somnambulist. Rolling sizable displacement waves ahead of it, *Micropterus Salmoides* floated submissively toward the snare.

"'Ef he gits away fum me now," shrilled Arch, "I'll follow

'im on ovah-bode an' grapple wid 'im on d' bottom—hol' on, Mist' Frank! You's leanin' too fur back! I'll git dis feesh—you's fixin' t—" With a hoarse gurgle of insuppressible triumph, Arch suddenly uppercut furiously with the long-handled net.

Whisked high and swung inboard, the bag's wiggling cargo of cream-and-green bass was dashed amidships in a shower of debris. And, like a tackler snatching for a loose football on a greasy gridiron, Arch dove on the fish. Mister Frank's overly tilted boat chair collapsed splinteringly, depositing him heels-over-head atop of Arch, writhing python-like amid a flurry of boat cushions, water jug, and bait box. Whereupon the corruptious bateau, wallowing like a torpedoed battleship, sank in three feet of water. Horace and I paddled to the rescue.

Surfacing and spouting water jets, Mister Frank shook himself like a Chesapeake Bay retriever and hoisted Arch afoot. The landing net was still clasped to the latter's sodden bosom. And within its strings, struggling weakly but stretching from Arch's chin to waistband, was Mister Frank's bass. At sight of it he cried aloud that his pusher's name would be inscribed forever upon loftiest Waltonian scrolls. Arch, however, took no chances. Wading ashore, he fought his way well inland before falling upon the net in a safety zone of tall weeds.

Mister Frank, still spitting out slivers of coontail moss, was helped to the clubhouse. There, with restoratives applied to both him and Arch, a weigh-in of his trophy disclosed a nine-pound, four-ounce record for big mouth bass taken at Beaver Dam on a fly rod. Toasts quaffed in celebration, Horace and I set out again for our own fishing. And while luck rode ahead, he fashioned a sequel tale of Arch and Mister Frank Attabury.

"Mist' Nash, whin, as a young feller, I come f'm d' Hills t' d' Delta, Mist' Frank Attabury hisse'f taught me mos' all I knows 'bout fishin' an' huntin' an' duties roun' d' big house his

papa an' mamma lef' 'im. Ol' Clarissa, d' cook who wuz wid Mist' Frank an' his folks all her whole life, learnt me how t' dish up vittles. Arch, who hepped ketch dat big bass back yonder jes' now, wuz Mist' Frank's papa's coachman an' den chauffeur after ottermobiles comed in. He always wint wid Mist' Frank t' fix d' goose huntin' camp, dig d' pits on d' san' bars, an' wait on Mist' Frank gin'ally."

Horace knifed the duckboat closer for first whippings at better bass water.

"Arch, he's er firs' rate fry cook, an' kin dish up plain grub right erlong wid me. But I beats him on breads an' fancy pies an' cakes an' sech. An' I conten's my Sally Lunn, cawn pone, Frinch-fried onions, an' chittlin's is better'n his'n.

"Sometimes du'in' d' summers, Arch, he'd lay off an' sorta holiday aroun' d' country. But he'd always show back up wid mo' money'n whin he lef'. He never shot no great amount o' craps, but he truly loved t' dally wid d' cyards. He didn' drink no whisky, neither, n' do no mean fightin'. He tol' me, 'Boy, you kin lose yo' dough an' live t' win ag'in—maybe. But ef you lose yo' temper, dat practickly 'eliminates d' maybe; an', in sech comp'ny, yo' life ain' no even money bet no mo'.' Arch ain't got er razor-blemish on 'im. He's good t' his wife an' chilluns, too."

A pocket just ahead, lush with wildfowl foods, spouted mal-lards. Horace clucked sorrowfully and congratulated them upon its being closed season.

"But Arch had one bad failin'. Du'in' pro'biton times he jes' would try t'git likker f' his white fren's. An' ev'y so often d' Law'd grab 'im. D' white folks, dey'd pay his fines an' time-off in d' caliboose, but hit used t' mek Mist' Frank madder'n hops. But you knows, Mist' Nash, how folks wuz du'in' pro'biton."

I admitted remembering how we were.

"Mist' Frank wuz born an' raised in Landon an' Landon county, an', as you knows, dey jes' ain' no finer folks nowhere 'n Landon. Dey's gen'rous, kin'ly, an' visits wid d' sick an' gives t' d' po' white 'n' black. Dey minds dey own bizness, an' ef ennybody on d' outside meddles wid it, dey rises lak one man. Standin' or fallin', dey's united. But 'mongst deyselves, dey's two sharp sides t' dey pol'tics. D' two factions swaps eroun' at times, but dey's always opp'sition—an' dey really goes to hit."

Horace puffed reflectively on his hand-rolled cigarette.

"D' p'litical sides o' Landon county split husban's f'm wives, brother f'm brother, an' Dem'crat f'm Dem'crat. D' few R'publicans in d' community wuz in gre't deman' by both crowds. Local an' party lines wuz f'gotten. Hit wuz jes' a case o' winnin' d' 'lection, an' dey'd fight, bleed, an' sometimes die t' do hit.

"Du'in' early pro'bitioin times, voters away down in d' cane-brake beats o' Landon county'd git full o' white mule on 'lection day an' staht overargufyin'. Whin d' shootin' stahted, dey'd run off behin' dem big trees in d' bottoms an' fill d' pin oak flats full o' fog t'well d' bullets give out. Nex' day, dey'd shake han's an' go on back t' raisin' crops an' R'publican taxes."

I snagged a three-pounder at the base of a toppled cypress, and there was brief pause while Horace chunked the victim into our icebox.

"Bobbycues at p'litical speakin's wuz sump'n in dem times. D' black folks always got dar at leas' a day ahead o' time. D' man wuz sho'ly right whut said, 'Bobbycues is lak nigger news, hit don' spread, hit jes' permeates.'

"Well, suh, jes' after pro'bitioin come, a red-hot Landon 'lection rolled aroun'. Mist' Frank Attabury, bein' d' state's

bes' lawyer, didn' mess atall wid no local pol'tics. Dey called him d' Guv'ner-maker, an' I guess he still is. He had done already bin Guv'ner an' United States Sen'tor. At dat time d' Yantis fambly wuz in d' high she'iff's office, an' d' Wherry fambly wuz on d' outside an' pantin' t' git back 'mongst d' fat fees. D' mayor's job wuz higher in d' sociable scale, but d' high she'iff's persquisites took up all dat slack.

"Mist' Wherry's son wuz contendin' f' high she'iff, an' wuz also engaged t' marry up wid Miss Clarice Yantis, d' she'iff's daughter. So d' p'litical an' sociable angles wuz mo'n ever complicated. Nobody knowed where dey stood n' whut t' promise who 'bout nuthin'. Likker had done natcherlly got scaice, so b'tween d' 'proachin' 'lection an' d' big weddin' d' same night, ev'ybody figgered on some fearsome doin's.

"Dey jes' had t' be plinty o' liquid 'freshmints f' d' Yantis-Wherry weddin'. But wid Mist' Wherry's son tryin' t' oust Mist' Yantis f'm d' high she'iff's fees, an' marryin' his daughter at d' same time, an' d' Law bein' plain in sech matters, d' queshun become mo' an' mo' involved. Mist' Frank Attabury knowed all 'bout d' business, but all he done wuz t' call Arch an' say, 'Min' yo' step.'

"Lil Miss Clarice Yantis took d' law into her own han's. She wint t' Memphis an' made 'rangements 'cordin'ly, an' den sent f' Arch. Upshot wuz, Arch wuz t' drive his Fode truck t' d' city an' run d' likker back t' Landon at night. Hit wuz t' be hid in Miss Flossie Friend's cellar, she bein' Miss Clarice's maid o' honor. Arch disregarded Mist' Frank's warnin', b'cause he'd waited on dem two young ladies sence dey wuz chilluns. So whut could he do?" The note of chivalry in Horace's presentation instantly biased me in Arch's favor.

"D' goose huntin' season opened d' day after d' big weddin',

an' Mist' Frank wuz sho' happy 'bout dat. Arch, he drove t' Memphis an' at d' likker man's house dey loaded in three cases each o' Scotch, bourbon, rye an' champagne. D' man tell Arch, 'Lissen, boy, ef d' Law git in behin' you, don' even slow down less'n dey's fixin' t' fill you full o' slugs. Run off down some side road an' unload dese cases o' good stuff, an' hide 'em. Let 'em ketch you wid dese other cases I'se loaded. Ev'ything'll be safe den. But git d' good likker hid out. Whin you gits t' Landon, give 'em d' proper word an' sen' back f' d' right boxes.' Arch, he lit out f' home.

"He got safely 'cross d' State Line, but 'bout 'leven o'clock headlights driv' in behin' 'im, an' Arch stomped his big foot on d' gas. He turnt off into a dirt road, an' so did d' Law. He th'owed up a big dus'-cloud, run thoo a lane, crosst a big grudge-ditch, dived into some woods, an' come out onto a bridge 'crosst d' bayou thoo d' Cullom place. He had done los' d' Law. He hid d' good likker under d' bridge, an' got back on d' gravel road t' Landon. Deppities Spraggins an' Turpin fastened 'im an' carried 'im on t' d' Landon jailhouse.

"Dey locked d' likker up in d' high she'iff's vault, an th'owed Arch in er cell. But Arch had done got 'em t' let 'im go by Miss Clarice's house t' speak wid his cousin, d' cook. Soon ez Arch give her d' word an' d' deppities lef', d' cook run an' tol' Miss Clarice whur d' stuff wuz hid. She woke up Miss Flossie, an' wid d' head-rusher at d' weddn' t' he'p, dey had d'other cases hid long befo' daylight.

"Mist' Frank Attabury wuz beside hisse'f wid rage 'bout Arch. Clarissa, d' cook, swo' he said he wuz gonna cut-a-shell f' Arch. He walked up an' down his study an' say, 'I tol' 'im pos'tiv'ly not t' have nuthin' t' do wid dat matter. Ez fur ez I'se c'ncerned, I hopes dey buries him under d' jailhouse. Heah 'tis goose huntin' season an' him in prison—er fine come-off!'

A long pocket of bassy water opened ahead of us, and a whopper struck from beneath a cluster of golden lotus bonnets. Some deft boat-handling by Horace helped us net that five-pounder.

"Nex' mawnin', Landon buzzed. D' preachers raised san' 'bout law enforcemint, accordin' t' d' strength o' dey p'litical views. D' Yantis side talked a lot 'bout d' case, but bein' in jail wuzn't nuthin' new t' Arch. He jes' kep his mouth shet an wint on winnin' money off d' other prisoner. He know'd Mist' Frank would rip an' cuss an' snort, but dat sooner er later d' proper suppo't would come thoo.

"Arch's case wuz set f' 'lection mawnin'. Miss Clarice an' Miss Flossie wint right on wid d' weddin' plans. D' high she'iff had d' ev'dince locked up, but he didn' know who hit really b'longed to, an' besides, Arch wuz Mist' Frank Attabury's man, an' d' high she'iff didn' want no great truck wid dat kin' o' p'litical dynamite. So dey all jes' set an' waited.

"Two nights befo' d' trial, Mist' Frank come home ve'y solemn. Didn' hardly say nuthin du'in' supper, an' whin I took his coffee t' d' study, he wuz talkin' on d' phone. He say t' me, 'Ho'ace, Mist' Roe Ulm gonna come t' d' back doh befo' long. Don't turn on d' light; show him in heah.' Den he say t' hisse'f, 'Dese scoun'l pol'icians ain' gonna th'ow my servant in jail at no goose huntin' time an' git away wid hit.' Befo' long, Mist' Roe Ulm, d' night jailer, come sneakin' in d' back way. In 'bout fifteen minutes he snuk out agin, grinnin', an' wint on off in d' dark.

"Mist' Frank call me in an' say, 'Load d' truck wid ev'ything f' d' goose huntin' camp. Git B.Z. (he wuz d' 'ssistant yard boy), ol' Spike, d' Chesapeake Bay dawg, an' gimme brekfus' at three o'clock t'morrer mawnin'. We's leavin' f' camp at a

new location I done foun'.' Jes' den someone tapped on d' front doh, an' Miss Clarice Yantis wanted t' speak wid Mist' Frank. Whin she lef', I heered Mist' Frank say, 'Both you girls oughta be spanked, but I'll stan' by. Leave hit t' me, chile.'"

Horace now pointed out, down-trail in a cypress-surrounded pool, the lurking place of a bass notorious for allegedly tearing up anglers' tackle. 'Ef we kin tie in wid 'im," he predicted, "he'll run Mist' Frank's big-un a good race." With Horace's keen eyes following each cast, I carefully whipped the shady side of a moss-scummed log. A slashing strike and leaden wrist jerk warned that I was hung to a fish of noble heft. Horace shot the paddle into reverse and in mid-pool the battle raged. Charge-by-salute the bass sold its life dearly. But, worn and netted, the scales revealed a six-and-a-half-pounder.

"He's d' gent'man Mist' Hal Howard hooked an' let git away f'm 'im wid d' bug an' leader," asserted Horace.

"What did Mister Hal say, Horace?"

"He cussed d' bass a while, den he cussed Lady Luck, an' ended up cussin' hisse'f." With such a big bass in the icebox, I suggested switching to bream tackle and taking a mess of pan fish in for supper. Again Horace took up Arch's and Mister Frank's trail:

"Me an' Mist' Frank an' B.Z. an' Spike lef' on time. 'Bout er mile outa town, Mist' Frank say, 'Stop!' He waved his flashlight todes er cabin settin' on a knoll, an' in a minnit ol' Arch come arunnin' an' clamb on d' truck. I say t' m'se'f, 'Aw-aw!' But I knowed better'n t' ast queshuns. We drove crosst d' levee an' fo' or five miles down thoo d' jungles aroun' Ol' River till we come to an Indian Mound wid tall oaks on hit. 'Heah's our campin' groun's,' says Mist' Frank, 'le's git busy—dey's gonna be lookin' f' Arch, an' we gotta protec' 'im.'

"He give Arch a shovel an' tol' 'im t' go thoo d' willows an' on up t' d' head o' d' san bar an' dig two goose pits bout two hunnerd yards dis side o' whur Ol' River cuts in back o' d' bar. Tol' 'im t' blaze a good trail thoo d' woods an' t' stay away fum camp till dusk-dark.

"By fo' 'clock me an' Mist' Frank an' B.Z. had camp all set. I wuz jes' gittin' supper stahted whin we heered a cyar comin'. In hit wuz High She'iff Yantis an' Deppity Spraggins.

"Mist' Frank holler, 'Howdy, boys— you-all tryin' t' spy on my goose huntin' groun's?'

"She'iff Yattis say 'Sen'tor, yo' Arch, charged, ez you knows, wid runnin' likker, done broke jail las' night—his trial is set f' t'morrer mawnin'. Ain' see'd nuthin' of 'im, is you?'

"Mist' Frank ast, 'D' hell you say, Cliff. How'd he break jail?'

"High she'iff Yantis say, 'Jailer Roe Ulm wuz took bad sick du'in' d' night, an' bein' a bachelor, he had t' call Arch t' tel'-phone d' doctor t' come an' he'p wid d' misery. Dey couldn' git Doctor Eddy's house, so Arch grabbed d' jail keys an' let hisse'f out. D' other pris'ner stayed t' he'p d' jailer. Befo' long, Doc Eddy come arunnin', an' say Arch sent 'im. But Arch, he jes' kep' agoin'. But we'll git 'im. D' blood-houn's is on d' case, an' if dey ketches sniff o' d' animosity in any man's feet, dey'll git'im.'

At the first flutter of my tiny bug lure with gold spinner ahead, a corpulent bream snagged it and tore for the buckbrush. What more thrilling sight than to watch these matchless little marauders attack bait and battle for freedom? Horace chuckled as that first victim splashed into the icy depths of the live-box.

"D' high she'iff nosed eroun' a while an' lef'. Mist' Frank wished 'em good luck wid d' bloodhoun's. He say he know'd both dawgs, pussonally, an' dey wuz good on el'phunts wid dey

th'otes cut in a five-acre fiel'. After supper an' dark, Arch come on in, an' we lit out in d' truck. Mist' Frank hid Arch under d' tarpaulin. Whin we got t' Landon, Mist' Frank sent Arch on up t' d' sleepin'-po'ch in d' big house.

"Landon wuz sho' in er swivet nex' mawnin'. Arch's hearin' wuz set f' tin o'clock, Miss Clarice's weddin' f' eight dat night, an' d' goose huntin' season opened nex' day. Mist Frank had a long talk wid Arch befo' brekfus'. I driv Mist' Frank t' d' Cotehouse, an' a big crowd wuz waitin' f' Jedge Berry t' preezide.

"Cote wuz called t' order an' Mist' Wartrace, d' pros'cutin' torney, got up an' says, 'Dis is d' State ginst Arch Lumpkin, charged wid d' illegal transpote o' likker an' also wid jail-break-in'. D' said Arch Lumpkin ain' heah no mo', he done havin' fled d' ju'isdiction o' dis Cote an' t' parts unknown.'

"'Bout den er big shoutin' riz up outside d' Cotehouse, an' lookin' thoo er window I seen Arch come runnin' 'crosst d' town square, wid Mist' Deppity Spraggins an' dem bloodhoun's jes' a short piece behin' 'im. Fum d' way dem dawgs wuz bayin', Arch sho' musser had plinty o' animosity in his feet. Arch run pantin' into d' Coteroom, an' up t' Mist' Frank. He say, 'Mist' Frank, heah I is. I'se done run all d' way f'm Memphis whur m' sister wuz dyin', but I'se heah t' answer dem untrue charges. I ain' run no likker.'

"D' high she'iff clamped d' han'cuffs on Arch an' says, 'Who is defendin' dis crim'nal jail-breaker?'

"Mist Frank riz up an' say, 'I is, Y' Honor, an' d' d'fince wants t' have d' corpuslickty showed. In other words, Y' Honor, us wants t' see d' likker whut my client, d' said Arch Lumpkin, is charged wid transpo'tin' 'ginst d' peace an' dignity o' dis Sov'rin' State an' Guvmint of, by, an' foh d' people.'

"D' high she'iff say, 'Heah's d' ev'dince, Y' Honor.'

"Mist' Frank say, 'All right, bus' open dem cases. I got t' see, smell, an' tas'e d' ev'dince.'

"Deppity Turpin pried open a case o' bourbon wid a hatchet an' handed d' high she'iff a bottle o' yallerish-lookin' stuff. Mist' Frank took d' bottle, pulled d' cork, smelled hit, grinned, an' handed hit t' ol' Judge Berry.

"He say, 'Tas'e hit, Y' Honor.' Ev'y preacher in Landon wuz lookin' an' list'nin'. But d' ol' jedge had t' tek d' bottle an' sip. His face wuz all screwin' up jes' ez Mist' Frank grabbed a paper layin' in d' open box, read hit an' handed hit up t' d' jedge. He had done took er really big sip. He made er tur'ble face, tried t' swaller, an' all but blowed up. D' cote constable had t' pat 'im on d' back t' keep 'im f'm stranglin'. Den d' jedge read d' paper. Hit said: 'Dis is d'limonade compoun' an' fruit juices f' d' weddin' punch, wid d' compliments o' Grandi an' Comp'ny.'

"Mist' Nash, ev'y one o' dem cases wuz full o' dat stuff. Mist' Frank jes' stood an' grinned. Finally he say, 'Y' Honor, I moves f' er d'rected verdic' o' not guilty f' d' 'fendant, on groun's o' no ev'dince. I also files notice o' civil an' p'haps crim'nal action 'ginst d' high she'iff an' his bondsmen, d' county corporashun an' whut has you—f' false arres', imprisonmint, def'mashun o' character, p'suit wid vicious dawgs, animosity o' d' feet an' whutever's lef' o' Arch Lumpkin.'

"Judge Berry wuz sho' mad. He say, 'I believes ev'ybody in d' presence o' dis Cote is in contemp' o' same—includin' dem damn dawgs—mek 'em quit barkin' an' git 'em t' hell outa heah. Ef d' ev'dince in dis case is 'toxicatin', dey ain' no justice an' I is Carrie Nation's firs' cousin.' He say, 'D' 'fendant, Arch Lumpkin, is herewith, fo'thwith an' ev'yother way mo'n cleared o' all charges, 'cludin' jail-breakin'. Cote dismissed.' Den he hauled away an' hit d' desk so hard wid dat li'l wooden maul o'

his'n dat his feet flew off d' floor an' d' maul handle busted an' throwed d' ink bottle all over d' constable."

By now we had ample bream for supper.

"Well," I queried, laying aside my rod, how did everything pan out?"

"Fine, Mist' Nash. You knows how gen'rous an' forgivin' Landon folks is."

"The Yantis-Wherry wedding came off all right, Horace?"

"Aw, yaas, suh. Me an' Arch an' Mist' Frank wuz on han'. Arch, he's d' bes' bartender dey is; us hepped serve d' weddin' feas'."

"Who won the high sheriff's race?"

"Mist' Wherry winned, but d' title stay'd in d' fambly. Me an' Arch waited on him an' Mist' Cliff Yantis whin dey clinked glasses. Mist' Wherry say, 'Popper-in-Law, whin you runs f' Congress nex' time, I'se goin' t' d' bridge wid you—lemme git Arch t' trickle a mite mo' o' dat Brooklyn Handicap into d' ex-she'iff's ex-highball."

"What about the goose hunt?"

"Me an' Arch drove Mist' Frank t' camp jes' in time t' mek d' goose pits at daylight. At leas', him an' Arch did. I stayed in d' camp an' done some sleepin'."

"Did they kill any geese?"

"Yaas suh, dey kilt d' limit an' coulda got mo'. Er big drove o' geeses lit in d' d'coys, but Arch claimed Mist' Frank snored so heavy he scared 'em away befo' Arch could unravel his afromatic 'mongst 'em."

The dinner gong beat brazenly across breeze-blown waters. I envisioned deliciously fried crappie, chilled tomatoes, hush-puppies, and iced coffee, with deep-dish peach cobbler. One line of questioning, however, remained to be clarified:

"Horace," I asked thoughtfully, while tiny wavelets splattered

muslin spray over our now speeding prow, 'how did the night jailer, Mister Roe Ulm, who was taken so violently ill the night Arch broke jail, come out?' Cutting a quick eye, I caught Horace's vain effort to hide an amused grin.

"Mist' Roe Ulm? He done mo'n all right. Yaas suh, Mist, Nash. He become d' nex' high she'iff."





A PRETTY PLACE FOR PHEASANTS

HE strode through St. Paul's railway-station gate that bright, crisp Sunday morning of September 17, 1944, with the swinging pace of a hardened, veteran outdoorsman in his prime—head up, shoulders squared, and with a smile of warm welcome for his old friends, Mel Steen and me, mantling his fine features. His handclasp was strong, but his voice a trifle husked by a bit of a cold.

When you haven't seen a fellow in several years, you wonder if he's changed much, and how, in turn, you'll look to him. In such a reunion, too, there is genuine gladness that one of your so much younger friends and co-workers has come along so splendidly in his work. Particularly if it happens to be one's own field of endeavor more or less; in Arthur's case and mine and Mel's, the restoration and conservation of wildlife resources. Which means, primarily, the care and proper utilizations of soils, waters, forests, and concurrent destruction of national pollution. Those lost; all lost.

I first knew Arthur Clark more than twenty years ago, when, as a young and buoyant member of the Massachusetts Game and

Fish Division's staff, he was eagerly absorbing and vigorously at work upon the conservational problems of those earlier times. Sterling qualities then saw him invited to the editorial staff of a national outdoor magazine. Later, Connecticut's Game Commission, needing a young and vigorous wildlife executive with ideas to head reorganized forces, chose Arthur Clark. Not so long thereafter Missouri's great, new Conservation Commission got under way. Twenty years ahead of its times, it could use a director for its Division of Game and Fish whose dossier revealed well demonstrated, outstanding ability, the open mind, and great courage. So Arthur Clark left his New England birth-land and accepted a call to the West. That was seven years ago, and this hunt with us was to be, in effect, his first real vacation.

Now, I reflected swiftly, behind Arthur and a redcap lugging his gun and suitcase, lay the fine fruits of planning constructively and developing with equally insatiable determination, a land-and-water-use program steadily rebuilding Missouri's soils and forests and wildlife resources back into the tawnily prairied and wooded game-and-fish paradise that its place in the sun once knew. Arthur Clark, with the boundless enthusiasm of a brilliant, original, and fearless thinker, had the vision and personality to alert both staff and public. If he drove, he beckoned. It was always—"Follow me."

After handshakes and back-slappings, together with his apologies for the "speakeasy" tones (which Arthur claimed hot coffee and ham-and-eggs would do a world of good) we drove to Mel's lovely home for such treatment and then loaded the big car for our long two-day drive to Bismarck, North Dakota. There we were to headquarter for our combined shooting and motion-picture safari. What a jaunt that was; up through flashing lakes country, climbing, climbing into more rolling headlands, stopping as afternoon wore away to look through two

tremendous federal wildfowl refuges in Mel Steen's charge as a ten-state director of Pittman-Robertson projects in the Northwest. Our companion was "Tip," Mel's great coal-black retriever. A cross of Labrador on Gordon setter, Tip proved a sober-sided yet at times jocose confidant and ally. What Tip didn't know about handling game and fetching had been torn out of the book.

We bunked that night at Jamestown, North Dakota, and early next morning drove through lovely Arrowwood sanctuary. Everywhere game was in abundance, the pot holes, sloughs, marshes, and lakes of that wide, wild land teemed with waterfowl. Across the highways and back roads paraded pheasants and Hungarian partridges. Among the stubbles we not infrequently spotted both sharp-tailed and pinnated grouse. We lunched in a basement community kitchen at Robinson, and then, turning sharply southwest, came in midafternoon to the fishing waters of another vast federal wildfowl refuge—Long Lake. Late that afternoon we made Bismarck, met our companions, secured all necessary licenses and frozen-food-locker accommodations for our game, and awaited season's opening of Wednesday morning, September 20, 1944.

Our cavalcade headed west for better than seventy miles, turned north, and the hunt and filming began on an area selected by Roy Bach of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. The cameramen and their assistants were soon at work selecting backgrounds and directing the activities of Mel and me as "official guns." And for the next several hours, until lunchtime, we put several escaping pheasants and some gorgeous landscapes on the celluloid. On Tuesday, Arthur Clark had visited a nose and throat specialist in Bismarck, and his voice and general condition seemed muchly improved. About noon our parties joined

up for luncheon sandwiches and then proceeded to "drive" a huge cornfield with two guns and the cameras at its far end.

Happening to look across the breast-high stalks, I saw Arthur, some two hundred yards distant, suddenly stop, lie down, and rest a while. When we met, I asked if anything was the matter and he replied, "Buck, I'm having trouble getting my breath; maybe I went after all that lunch too stout in this altitude." I don't know why, but suddenly I noticed a bluish tinge to his lips; all the more noticeable against sudden pallor. I advised him to stay in the car a while and take it easy. "This is your first heavy-duty exercise in a good while, fella," I remember saying. "Warm up gradually." So he did ride the cushions through several ensuing drives, laughing and telling yarns to the rest of us during search for beautiful backgrounds, fantail and curlicue sky effects that artistically obsessed movie directors crave.

We passed a narrowish, quarter-mile-long cornfield off the road a bit that appealed to our Mr. Rod Warren. Mel Steen and Bob Anderson stayed with the cameras as guns, while Roy Bach drove Arthur Clark, Harold Siebens, and me to the far end of the corn for a drive-through. When Harold and I set out, Arthur insisted on accompanying us. "I'm tired of sitting around," he expostulated. "I'm feeling bully, and this looks like a comparatively soft-touch of a walk, anyhow." So we three tramped a couple of hundred yards up a slight, sagey slope to gain the patch. Harold swung off to its left side. Arthur and I, thirty feet apart, stepped across a low wire fence to take our stations and space up the drive correctly.

As I paused at the corner, Arthur had just cleared the barrier. "Buck," he called, and smiled at me when I turned around, "this is certainly a pretty place for pheasants." "It sure is, Art," I replied, and turned to study the exquisitely sun-tinted rim of

a distant moraine. I'll never know what vague premonition drew me to glance sharply around—but I did—and Arthur Clark was not there—just to my left at corn's edge. Perhaps what startled me, for my hearing is not as keen as of old, might have been the clatter of his falling gun. I leaped past the view and saw him stretched face downward in the clipped wheat stubble.

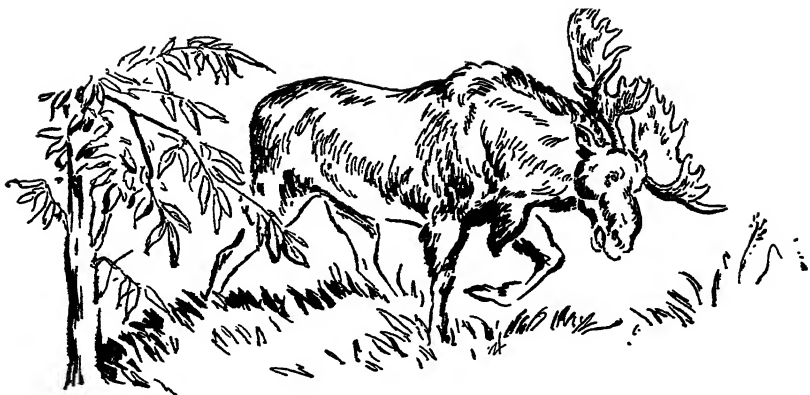
Kneeling swiftly and shouting for Siebens, I lifted Arthur and caught him into my arms. The sharp, stiff stubble-brush had scratched and bloodied his left cheek. But on his face there was only an uncontorted, peaceful half-smile. And when he sighed faintly and relaxed, I knew, somehow, that the end had come with beneficent swiftness and mercy. Harold was there by then and with deft coolness began administering artificial respiration while I ran for the car. We lifted him into it and Mel drove like mad for the town of Hebron, some fifteen miles away. There, he and I carried Arthur up steep steps and laid him composedly on a sofa in the country doctor's office. But I knew before and while that worthy and kindly practitioner listened for long, that Arthur's soul went aloft out there in the clipped wheat at the edge of the corn.

How truly has it been said that no great leader of men has ever yet entered his Promised Land. But, with his dying eyes, he has seen visions of its future. What were your visions, Arthur Clark? We believe we know full well, because your dreams for a wilder, purer, more healthful and happier Missouri were constantly upon your lips in words of thoughtful determination and zestful pride. We know because of your all-but-last hunter's words that your soul held no greater ambition than to provide posterity and your own brave, soldier son with the kind of earthly paradise out of doors pictured in your own conception of an earliest America reborn.

And so, our eyelashes flicking back the tears, Mel and I left

you there—asleep. You did not quite gain gunner's reward from that pretty place for pheasants, but by then your eyes had beheld greater glories by far. You had entered *His* Promised Land. Always, in driving a cornfield, I'll hear your hail and look back to catch your smile. Someday the enriched lives of Missouri's populace will be your monument as imperishable as the strength of the hills. "May the Eternal God be your Refuge and underneath you the Everlasting Arms."





BACKWARD—TURN BACKWARD

(From notes in the old logbook)

BE AVER DAM, 1893. I was at that tender year of yearning when boyhood longs to see something fall at the report of his blunder-buss, with small responsibility as to whether he caught his meat "settin'" or killed it on the wing. The former preferably as being decidedly more certain of fulfillment. Father and I were shooting ducks at his Mississippi club down in the Delta. At that time much of the country was uncleared and the territory adjacent to our lake afforded deer and very excellent turkey shooting. A pioneer lumber company, operating in the neighborhood, had driven a tram system deep into the forest brakes east of the club, and it was my custom to hike down this plank railway quite a distance and then circle off into the dense canebrakes and ridges to look for game. One morning, the flight of ducks having ceased to be entertainingly lively after ten o'clock, I returned to the house in company with my negro paddler, trudged down the tramway for about two miles before branching off into the wilderness. At the head of an oak ridge we separated, Jackson remaining in the timber and

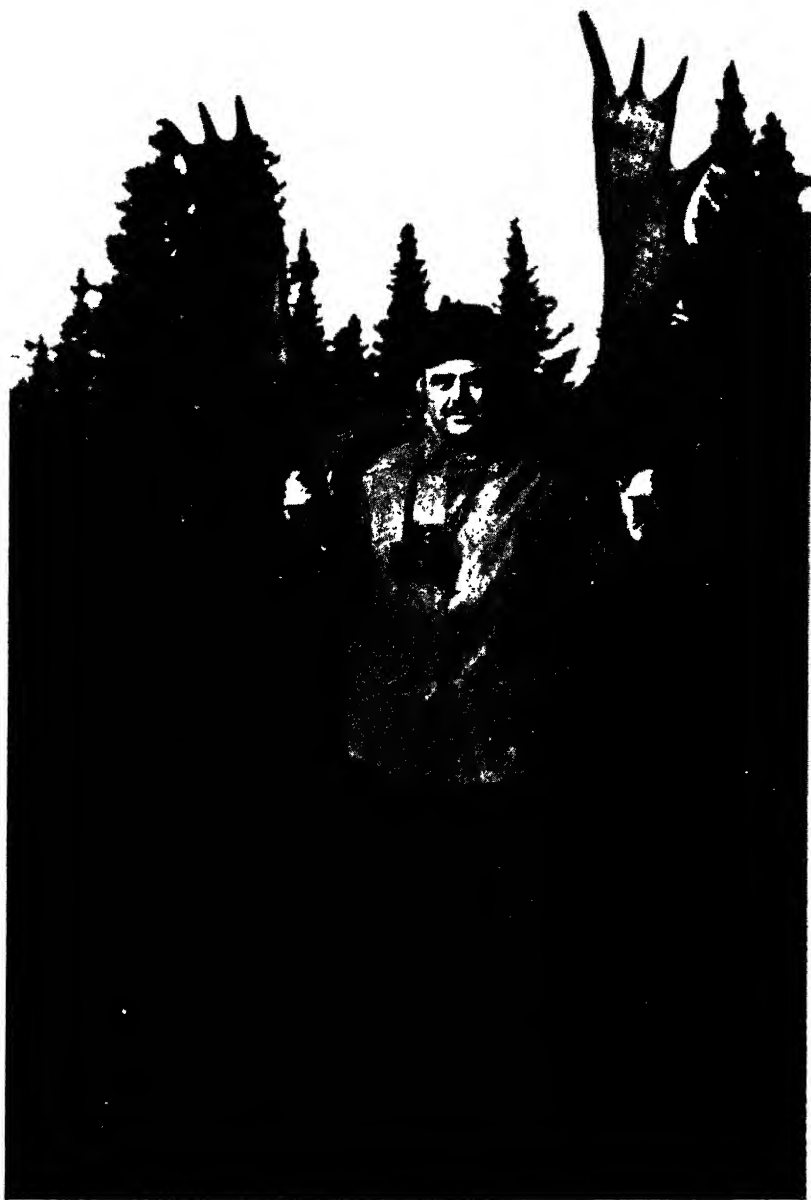
directing me across a small corn clearing in order to surround a dense cane bottom. Longing for Fate to throw the possibilities for a shot at a turkey my way, I plowed bravely away across the flooded field. I was shooting an ancient double-barrel British-model hammer gun, the pride and joy of my young heart. It bore hammers of heroically upright mold, the plungers were as sprightly as lobes of quicksilver, and the pistol grip, having been severely cracked in the old days, was held together by a pretentious band clasp of German silver splicing.

In those days it was an event when we kids got hold of a box of real shells. We sat up nearly all of Friday nights loading empty "hulls," and when, with my share of such output, I began fogging up, old Resolute roared like a lion and oftentimes turned me halfway round with the force of his kick. But to resume!

In wading laboriously across the cornfield I suddenly heard a loud "honk." Looking up, startled, I saw a flock of geese, flying quite low and headed straight for me. Very much surprised at encountering such quarry in this out-of-the-way district, I crouched beside a piling of stalks and waited, heart in mouth. At the same moment came the report of Jackson's gun, in the timber, and cutting my eye in that far-off direction I perceived several large birds rise scattering and take wing in all directions, one, a particularly large fellow, setting his flight directly toward my hiding place. There I was, with a flock of nervous geese almost upon me on one side and a noble gobbler bearing down from the opposite angle. I chose quickly, in my mind's eye, deciding in favor of turkey. Something told me that the day which comes to every dog had rolled up to my door, that here at last was my golden harvest chance to rise above my playmates, whose .22 Flobert war sagas and chants boasted nothing more splendid than encounters with meadowlarks,

savage cottontails, or lurking hoot owls. With the rapidity of thought characteristic in such tense moments I conjured up a vision of that massive, meaty form, stately even in ovened death, being borne onto our Sunday dinner table, amid the plaudits and envious acclaim of my brothers and sisters. The pinnacle of acknowledged fame—First Helping! I pictured his expansive exterior delicately crisped and basted with a giblet gravy of toe-curling delicacy. And within, a wondrous store of cornbread stuffing, a hodgepodge grab bag of savory oyster choppings, raisins, and chestnuts, which copious dressing, diligently mixed and beaten into the gravy, formed ingredients to the most wonderful of sops.

On sailed my mighty prey, to within twenty-five yards of where I bent—trembling in every limb. *Nunc aut nunquam!* I rose and summoned within me every ounce of determination and care. Seeing me, the great bird swerved with amazing speed. I caught a glint of bronze, saw the doubled feet, the craning neck and gouty, purple mottled wattles. Swinging Old Resolute onto the snaky head I let drive a first thunderbolt. Saints! I had missed clean. With a wave of premonitory despair at heart I settled down and unlimbered a second booming dose. Came a puff of floating tail feathers, but on and on and on sailed my dream gobbler, his flight as steady as the wash of a dreadnaught. With rage and shame fighting to the death within my heaving boyish breast I stood quivering with helpless mortification and watched the lucky rascal wing away to the safety of the cane-brake. The geese, meanwhile, with loud honks of derision, mounted skyward at the first report of trouble and swept on toward the lake. Then disappointment triumphed. With a mighty yell of baffled emotion and disgust I clutched Resolute by his innocent, powder-smearred muzzle and cast him far hence—to land with a splashing flubbity-flop in the muddy loam.



“Hal has crossed over the river—so let my ‘Ahai Ahatou-Hai’ ring

Then, humiliation spent, I fished my old friend from the mire and spent a wretched half hour swabbing him free of mud. At length Jackson appeared, bearing a fine, fat hen turkey he had bagged from the rise of the flock. Careful cross-examination and judicious, subtle questioning made it plain that the darky had not been a witness of my discomforture. That helped some. We took to the woods and later on Jackson managed to "call up" a medium-size gobbler, on whose succulent person I evened up matters and took "ground" revenge. I bore him to the clubhouse with all hunting honors, but when my culinary dream came true at home, somehow things would have been vastly different had my bird been the big fellow. Later on, when getting a turkey became an old story, I 'fessed up to Father about my miss of the dream bird. More than fifty years have passed since those days, but I can still shut my eyes and see that buxom, brown king gobbler sailing 'twixt the rearing hammers of Old Resolute—and wonder "how in the name of Sam Hill it all happened"!

October, 1907. When packing-up time drew nigh, Snowdy and I weakened and went over to the enemy. A simon-pure case of discarding old friends for new. Too much reading of scientific shocking-power "dope" together with rifle statistics and ballistics did the work, for we sidetracked our old stand-by smoke wagons and ordered each a .405. We admitted, during the many preliminary discussions, that my .30-40 and his .303 had invariably brought home the bacon and done yeoman service on deer, elk, and sheep; but argued that as we were now to tackle moose—well, you know what I mean—we didn't want to take any chances, so eventually fell for the other weapons. When the artillery arrived we escorted "them" into the woods lot near home for a tryout. Snowdy's walloped him on the jaw right off the bat, but after we had fired several rounds at stumps

and logs and had seen the apparent carnage wrought by the 300-grain chunks of lead, we went wild and agreed that we had made most eminently desirable and worthy connections. And no doubt we had. But for the life of me I couldn't forget old Meat-in-the-Pot. I'll admit he wasn't much for good looks, but he certainly carried winning ways for all his barrel being worn quite shiny and his stock scarred and notched, said notches registering "Taps" for a long line of victims. Of course I took him along, such a thing as leaving him at home never for once entering my head, lugging his straight old frame through Pullmans and incidentally putting up with a world of trouble and bribery tips to see that he was taken care of. In camp I stood his muffled form in a corner of the tent and offered my arm to the .405.

Next afternoon Arthur and I were calling at the edge of a small bog. "Leesen," said Arthur, "yu' hear um?"

Sure enough, by straining my ears to the breaking point I detected, from somewhere in the depths of the forest, a faint ringing sound, as if some housewife were striking a dishpan against a table to flick the water clear.

"Hit'tum horns—tam'rack-comin'."

In a few more breathless moments I distinctly heard the snapping of branches, sharp crackling of twigs, and then a deep, coughy "Woof-ugh-ah-Woof." We crouched lower behind a tamarack shield. The advance became a crashing recklessness; and then, out into the open, at the lower arm of our bog, not over seventy-five yards away, stepped my first bull moose. Evidently instinct warned him that something was wrong—radically amiss—for he lowered his antlered head and stood like an enraged pasture bull, snorting defiance at an unseen enemy and eying our end of the field with cordial animosity and sus-

picion. I slid the stubby Giant-Killer under an intervening branch, drew down low on his chest, and pulled.

Ever see a stouthearted, well-trained cow pony get down and scratch after he's snatched some big steer clear off his feet at the far end of a lariat? Well, that's just the effect of that .405 soft-nose. It smacked Mr. Moose plump off his feet and onto his side, where he lay for the time being. "That's the way to handle all moose, Arthur," said I, blowing a wisp of smoke through the barrel from the open lock and stepping jauntily from our hiding place—"he's a mere child, this ram certainly got his goat, didn't he?"

But that worthy had gone suddenly into the wildest of ravings.

"Daid! Hella fi! Shoot um 'gin—queek! Queek!—um goin' way—shoot, shoot!" His voice rose to a quavering wail.

Sure enough, M'sieu L'Bull had staggered to his pins and, in the parlance of the prize ring, was doing some powerfully fancy footwork for a recipient of so recent and lusty a punch. I yanked the lion-tamer's breech block into position and cut down three times on the vanishing moose. Yet when the forest ceased echoing, Arthur and I were quite alone, saving a bloody lip that belonged to me. Then the guide sprinted for the blood sign trail, and I after him. It wasn't difficult to follow. The bushes, grass, and elders were dank and strewn in places with thick gobby splotches, but darkness overtook us ere long and the wounded bull hadn't slackened pace appreciably. We gave it up then and after an hour's hard work by the lighted aid of birch torches we found the canvas. Somehow, such wretched work for a starter rather tainted my confidence and liking for the big bullet shooter, so next day while Arthur and I picked up the trail and hunted without success for my wounded victim, I packed Meat-in-the-Pot.

Next morning, I'll admit, I was sleepy. Arthur and Dick boiled the kettle while Snowdy and I fried the side meat and shook the frost out of our hides and bones. The snack bolted, Dick and Snowdy slunk away in one direction, while I, offhand like, picked up the .405 and, accompanied by Arthur, sneaked through the dripping undergrowth to call at a neighboring plain. Hidden in an alder point jutting into the open, Arthur did his best to raise something with the birch megaphone. We had several nibbles and once or twice fancied we heard mysterious rustlings in the forest, but by eight o'clock nothing confirmatory had shown up so we pulled for the tent, keeping close to the wall of the bushes fringing the bog. Rounding a point, we met Opportunity—with a capital O—face to face, and with the meeting our shoe-pacs halted, froze to the moss like a bird dog's feet when he stumbles onto a covey. Not over a hundred feet—not yards—away stood a gigantic bull moose, quite as surprised, I'm sure, at this unexpected meeting as we were. He stood just outside the sheltering green rib of the trees, ankle or hock or fetlock in the mossy ooze, and I saw dangling from his prehensile lip a bit of nannie berry bush cropped from the rich picking, being slowly chewed. He was trying very hard to make out those two graven images tense with the shock of chance. We were absolutely head-on. He stretched his long arch-maned neck to wind us, the bit of nannie berry bush disappeared munch by bunch, and I noticed with a quick flash of amusement how horribly knock-kneed the old hoocher was.

"Queek now—um beeg moose!"

Small need to remind me of that. Who couldn't see the broad and lofty spread of palmation, the protruding reddish brow pans and tines, the dull brown, coveted beauty of its massiveness glistening in the early slanting sunlight? I was perfectly cool, so steady in fact that I stepped quickly to one side two paces

to secure more side-line sighting space on his shoulder. And wonderful to relate, he still munched the bit of nannie berry bush, curled his hairspring prehensile lip at us, bristled, shrugged, and stared. The big gun came up and that moose might simply have been a commonplace buck with "steak for supper" written on his side, for all the shaking of my hand. I fastened the front tip of the bead just at the forward lower belly line, and touched the spring. The bog awoke, and in that wonderful flash second that elapses after every shot I saw the moose sink sharply until his nostrils scraped the moss and I thought—. He sank a second time, but with a gathering of the haunches and a powerful lunge that sent the spongy footing and twigs flying as the great animal plowed crashing into shelter and tore a path to freedom. I caught two fleeting glimpses of him, and at each one, in poignant despair, I sent a .405 crashing in his direction. No use. The echoes died away and I was left standing there in my Slough of Despond with only Arthur—and Shame. My first inclination was to burst into tears; my second to summon profanity, Everyman's temper friend in times of vexation, to my aid. But the agony was too great. I was utterly crushed and in my own sight and that of all Nature, a lowly ruffian, beneath contempt.

I will always be grateful to Arthur for taking it as he did. No remonstrance, no pained sarcasm or sullen disappointment at that lost chance for a record head—maybe. His big, hearty, cheerful laugh really did more good than all the condolences, or profanity or excuses ever invented; more good than anything else in all the world next to seeing that mammoth bull taking the count.

"Ahh-hahh, now! whad you do? St. G'maine! you mees da bull, heem gone now. Well—well! nev' min', odder moose jus' so beeg as heem. We ged um—too."

Dragging home, disconsolate, wounded to the quick, some-

thing whispered to my conscience that I had "gotten mine" for passing up my old and tried friend. All foolishness, mayhap, but that's the way it came home to me, nevertheless. Over and over I analyzed the situation, every move, each act, long, long after the fire had sunk into a feeble glow and I could distinguish the heavy breathing of my companions. Since that unfortunate episode I'll wager I have sighted down that memoried gun barrel no less than one million times; and yet the only straightforward, logical conclusion that I've drawn is that I flinched at the critical moment or else didn't hold it on him—the former most likely. Anyway that night I tied the disgraced .405 high up in the tent where the porcupines might not gnaw the stock and next day found me thicker'n fleas with Meat-in-the-Pot. It was early when Arthur and I parted the alders and peered out across Skinner's Bog.

"Ah ha!—looker—yonner."

Far across the misty, hummocky expanse I saw three angular moose jacklegging it solemnly for the opposite shore.

"One behin', he seem beeg bull—t'ink too far, do'—" Maybe he was too far, but I'd seen too many elk and wary bucks toppled off skylines and side hills and across gulches at distances that would make this shot look like leap-frog range.

"Too far nothing. I'm going to have a crack at that guinea—" So saying, I laid Meat-in-the-Pot lovingly cuddled against a tamarack, coarsened his familiar sights (we knew naught of wind gauges and range finders), and popped away, apparently without success. I had just given vent to a snarl of rage when over rolled Mr. Bull of Skinner's Bog, stumbling to his knees and plunging into the muck, dead as a corner-grocery pickle-barrel herring. His two lady friends stood petrified for a moment and then hiked for cover. A very plain, matter-of-the-fact sort of proceeding, all the way round. The delighted and completely

mollified Arthur attended the autopsy, with my aid, and I felt decidedly repaid for the loss of my record head—maybe—when I saw this one. We fetched Snowdy to the scene and stepped off the distance of my shot, just 457 paces. The .30-40 Hoxie had entered just behind the bull's shoulder and quartered through, reading the riot act to his bullship's innards en route. Later on Snowdy, after one excruciating miss, bagged his moose with the .405. At 105 measured paces he slammed four of them into the neck and shoulders of a well-to-do bull, sending him down with the fourth punch. At fifteen paces the fallen monarch clambered to his knees and faced Snowdy, whereupon that worthy finished him with another .405 in the head, not wishing to take further chance owing to the fact that he didn't consider fifteen paces sufficient handicap in a sprinting match through the burnt lands with an enraged moose. Understand, I'm not blaming the .405 for all the tale of moose woe. Like the chorus lady who didn't have a word to say against a girl friend—*only this*—that for lions and "India rubber bulls," as a darky called an elephant that escaped from the circus, the .405 is doubtless awfully strong medicine, but in our humble little outing the .30-40 showed it up. I sold my .405 to a deputy sheriff in Mississippi. Snowdy still has his and claims to have slain therewith a huge Alaskan bear. He testifies that at the time of the killing he was perched in the secure fork of a large, ample tree indigenous to critical Alaskan situations of that kind, and practically surrounded by bears, any one or all of whom would have given its life for an opportunity to go to the mat with him. Personally I don't think much of the story—but he has absolutely no witnesses except the bears—and tells it well.

We Give You Back

As though 'twere yesteryear this happy gunning day
I seem to see again my Jim-dog, exquisite in grace,
A-pointin' bobwhites down on sedge-blown Carrier's
Hill

Where Mord Short's valley climbs t' join th' Waldrip
place.

No need t' caution stanch Jim-dog,
That nose of his spelled birds for any bet,
If you did your job half as well as Jim knew his
For steadiness to wing and shot; he'd be there yet.
Dear old Lucius held our horses, Hal's and mine,
Just out of sight beyond the ridge top's piney rim,
And Hal grinned, ambling down to shoot—
“God bless a day and dog like this and Jim.”
They flushed from right where old Jim said they were,
We scored, and two were left behind,
Jim fetched and nuzzled one to each of us
While we caressed and thanked him for the gorgeous
find.

To hunters all, from Hal and Jim: Aye! they're long
gone;

Well, call it sentiment or just old soldiers' whims,
We give Youth back a memory for its soldier lads
And pray they had and still may have their days—
and Jims.

—NASH BUCKINGHAM



"God bless a day and dog like this...."

